

Supply

• (1950)

The instances he has brought to us this evening raise two fundamental questions. One is the desirability of any government engaging in such widespread and basically irresponsible public polling and having followed that extravagant route, not sharing with the taxpayer the results of its polling which the taxpayer has paid for.

The basic problem is whether this sort of extravagance can be justified in any way. Quite clearly it is one of the instances that the Auditor General should examine. Such instances should be a matter for concern on the part of all taxpayers as we consider the ways we govern ourselves.

I can hardly believe there are any Canadians who would think their taxes should be spent in the way the hon. member from Ottawa has just described. I welcome his taking the occasion this evening to draw our attention to this sort of irresponsible extravagance that has marked the whole term of office of the present government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, I listened earlier to the hon. member for Etobicoke North who made a nice speech on what the government did wrong which lead to the current deficit and government inefficiency. I want to point out to my Liberal colleague that his own party was in charge of managing the affairs of the nation for many years, from 1972 to 1984, and that during this period the Liberal government spent more than it could afford to. Today we know very well the main cause of this situation. It is the centralizing Liberal government which generated those terrible deficits by creating a climate of confrontation between the provinces and the federal government.

The Conservative government made the same mistake. Last year, for the first time in the history of Canada, a department of education was set up, in spite of the fact that education is a provincial matter. Duplication of management activities between the provinces and the federal costs over \$10 billion a year.

The Liberal member who wants us to believe that there are ways of improving the administration of this system while at the same time maintaining a climate of confrontation between the federal government and the

provinces would only perpetuate what the Conservatives do and what the Liberal government did before.

I wonder if the hon. member will ever learn that the only way to succeed, to steer Canada away from bankruptcy, assuming it is not already too late, is to decentralize. Only then will we be able to reduce expenditures and make all these operations more efficient. What do the hon. member and the Liberal Party propose to improve the economic situation of the country?

[*English*]

Mr. MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether my friend who has just asked me the question wishes to engage in a pot calling the kettle black type of conversation. He was a Conservative for some years and presumably in that role endorsed the extravagant spending practices of the present government.

• (1955)

I think it is idle to spend a lot of time addressing the question of what one government or another did in some years past. What we are debating tonight is the government's supply measures. We are addressing the practices of this government over recent years.

If the member wishes to speak of centralization or decentralization I think that he is posing the problem in the wrong terms. Surely he or any Canadian taxpayer would want to see the elimination of duplication and interprovincial barriers to the free movement within our own country of goods, services, people and capital. I do not think it is beyond the wit of the government of the day or indeed of parliamentarians to eradicate the myriad of ways in which we engage in extravagant duplication between two and indeed three levels of government. If we seriously addressed the question of interprovincial trade barriers we would make real progress in the reduction of excessive government spending.

Mr. Pat Sobeski (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the questions were long because the member for Etobicoke North talks about the past and I wanted to ask him a question. I will put it on the record and I am sure he will respond.

For every \$3 in spending cuts in Bill Clinton's budget there is an increase of \$1 in tax, while the budget of the last finance minister gave no tax increase and then cut