

Hon. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that we have got through the initial procedural problem. It will not be an easy day. Just as we came into the House we were given this package of amendments which we will have to deal with through the Committee of the Whole stage. Since they are not printed in our Order Paper, I understand we will have to read them into the record.

In this Bill we are dealing with amendments to the Financial Administration Act. The call and demand for these amendments has come out of a long series of meetings and many hours of deliberation between the Auditor General and his staff, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Treasury Board. These are housekeeping amendments which are probably meant to bring us out of the quill pen age, as the Comptroller General says, and up to the computer age. They are highly technical.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Lang) was good enough to meet with me as the Official Opposition critic of the Treasury Board and we spent some hours on these. I have been assured by the Comptroller General that each of these amendments is necessary. I just want to explain that the reason for all of these amendments is to take care of objections that the Office of the Auditor General has had to Bill C-96 in its printed form. These amendments have come a long way toward doing that.

At the outset, I must say that one of the matters that was not agreeable to us during the negotiation stage was Clause 3. We had problems dealing with that clause. The wording was submitted to me by the Comptroller General. I would assume that the wording as submitted to me by him, amending Clause 3 to fit with anxieties that we had, is what is in this package. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) nods yes. So that concern is covered.

● (1125)

Over the years, I suppose since Auditor General Macdonell flew the signal in March of 1976 that spending was out of control, a hard working group, including the Deputy Speaker, has worked on procedures and attitudes to try and bring the matter back under control. I stand here as a person who is very concerned at what has happened to our Government and what is going to happen to our country if somehow or other Hon. Members in this House cannot deliver themselves to a new direction and to a new attitude—and it is going to have to be an apolitical attitude—in order to bring the runaway, out of control spending of the Government of Canada under control. It is not necessarily totally the fault of the incumbent Government, but it has to accept the responsibility for what has happened to the country in the last 14 years. The matter is of crisis proportion today.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), on August 13, 1969, recognized that the behaviour of governments in Canada and in the western world was going to cause serious deprivation and problems for the poor, the sick and the elderly. I stand here to make a plea to all Members of this House of Commons, my own Party, the New Democratic Party, the Government Party and the independent, that if we are going to bring the system under control, we are going to have to change our

Financial Administration Act

attitudes. We in this House, as individual Members, are to blame. We are the politicians. We go to the electorate and make promises and we are proud of what we deliver back into our constituencies. There are Hon. Members who are proud of what they can gather here and deliver back. That seems to be how the people of Canada relate to politicians. They seem to accept half-truths.

I am suggesting to you, Sir, that we are at the end of that road. What we are dealing with in this Bill is just the beginning. All we are doing is dealing with the technical aspects of the Financial Administration Act, to allow for some of the new value for money concepts which we passed in our Auditor General Act and in the amendments to the Financial Administration Act which gave us the Comptroller General and will allow the central agency of the Treasury Board and the office of the Comptroller General to function and overcome the handicaps, abuses and voids which the Auditor General has been pointing out for some years now.

I do not have trouble in agreeing to the Bill. Our Party is going to support the Bill in order to get it through the House all in one day. However, I would want each element of it to be talked about and understood. It is good for Members of this House to have an understanding of what we are doing.

I rise to take time on second reading to make an appeal. We, as a western world nation, are in a catch-22 situation. I have just come from the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, which was questioning the Secretary of the Treasury Board. I can appreciate that the President of the Treasury Board has been busy getting ready for this day in the House, but it is unfortunate that he was not in that Committee this morning because the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates is a Committee of the House dealing with policy. We examine senior Deputy Ministers, like the Secretary of the Treasury Board in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts; and in that standing committee we are apolitical and do not touch policy. However, with the nation in the dilemma in which it is today, in spite of the Prime Minister's warning back in 1969, the whole system is out of control. In spite of the Auditor General's warning in March of 1976, we are in 1983 even further out of control and something has to be done. We have to cross Party lines and cross the bridge between the politicians and the professionals who manage the federal Government system.

● (1130)

In my opinion and that of many others, if we continue this way the system will go into total collapse. Those social policies we are so proud of in Canada are going to collapse with it. Our pensions are going to collapse. We cannot get this country back on its feet creating wealth if we have a fat, careless, slothful overburden in the form of government. We can trim the federal Government, make it lean and effective, as our value for money legislation calls for. But I really fear for the people of Canada if we continue the way we are because we