

bour. If you like, it is the price of being civilized, and it cannot be cut with impunity.

Mr. Baldwin: What a price!

An hon. Member: Who said that?

Mr. Chrétien: I am saying so, and there are a lot of people who subscribe to that thesis because we have won a lot of elections on that issue.

Mr. Baldwin: The price is not right.

Mr. Chrétien: The point I am making in the context of this motion is that the indirect expenditures to which I have referred are mainly parliamentary commitments by which the executive is bound, and they can be changed only by parliament. The executive does not have the power to alter such things as old age security payments at its own discretion.

Mr. Baldwin: What about the meat?

Mr. Chrétien: Since 1974 such transfer payments as those for old age security, guaranteed income supplement, unemployment insurance and family allowances—all amounts destined to be spent by individuals rather than by governments—accounted for more than \$8.6 billion. Another \$6 billion was collected by the federal government and turned over to the provinces to be redistributed by them to individuals, groups, and local governments.

Mr. Stanfield: I will read it in *Hansard*.

Mr. Chrétien: Bonjour, Mr. Stanfield. Add to this the fact that more than \$2 billion was distributed in subsidies to farmers and by way of incentives to encourage business to locate in areas of high unemployment, and one wonders how the opposition can become so desperate as to claim the need for a reduction in the administrative capability required to remain fully accountable to parliament in carrying out its wishes.

I would remind hon. members that we spend 500 hours a year examining estimates in the standing committees. When one attends these committees one is amazed by the pettiness of the questions which are asked there.

The other day the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) spent a whole day talking about the potted plants we have in the Treasury Board offices. There is an old man, 87 years old, who read about that in *Hansard*. He happens to be my father. He took a trip from Montreal to see what the scandal was about. He went to the department for the first time and then he told me, as we say in French, "That was nothing à fouetter un chat. We have better than that in the old folks' home in which I am living." But it is the kind of petty politics which the opposition plays when we give them 500 hours in which to examine the expenditures of the government.

My father is a layman, a good Canadian who worked for 50 years in a factory. And he would not believe we could spend time on petty things like that.

Mr. Baldwin: Was he out on Harrington Lake?

Auditor General

Mr. Chrétien: Oh, the opposition has great fun speaking about the Prime Minister's house. I do not have to defend the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). But what beats me is the way they like to talk about that big Cadillac of his. I know that guy; I have known him for many years. That is the last thing he would travel in—a Cadillac. It's not his style! When we were both practising law he would go to work on a motor cycle, and people could not believe that a lawyer like the Prime Minister, defending unions, would come to Shawinigan from Montreal on a motor bike. But because he is now Prime Minister the RCMP has decided that he should travel in a car like that. I am sure he hates to be in that big car—he would like to drive that little quick one that he owns. That is more his style.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He should have the opportunity.

● (1740)

Mr. Chrétien: It is not wise to have debate and to spend hours or days in the House speaking about matters such as that. But because certain Canadians have put up money to build a swimming pool at the Prime Minister's residence, this is supposed to be a big scandal. It is not the Prime Minister's money, and this swimming pool will be used by future Prime Ministers. I should like to think that one day one of you guys over there will be able to take advantage of it, but the way you are handling yourselves in the House that will not happen for a very long time.

We like to have constructive criticism, but the motion before the House today is not that at all. I might tell hon. members that we are working on the Wilson report. We had two options with which to deal. We could have sent this report to a committee and then waited a year for a report back, study it in cabinet, then bring in a bill which we would send the committee, where it would be another year before it became law. But we have decided to take faster action, and I ask hon. members to judge that. The easiest solution for us would be to send the matter to committee and wait for a report back.

Mr. Alexander: Your front bench support has left.

Mr. Chrétien: Do not worry, they have confidence in me. They know there is no substance to these allegations. I do not understand why we spend so much time on this matter. We have stated our policy. If in the fall or during the next session the government does not bring in a bill, then hon. members will have a good point. Then will be the time to tell me I have not produced. I am doing my best right now.

Mr. Baldwin: Why could not we have some say about this? Why are you afraid of us?

Mr. Chrétien: This report was tabled a few weeks ago.

Mr. Baldwin: I do not have the time to wait another ten years.

Mr. Chrétien: We should go to the substance of the problem. Hon. members say the power of parliament has been removed. The House still had direct control over expenditures and budgets, but the point is that the House of Commons does not want to take action on these things.