

—the scope of audit examinations conducted under the statutory requirements of the Financial Administration Act and other acts, and the types of other inquiries relative to the financial affairs of Canada which may be performed on request;

—the relationships between the Office and

The Public Accounts Committee, the Minister of Finance, the Treasury Board, the Public Service Commission, audit groups within government departments and agencies, government departments and crown corporations audited by the Auditor General, and other professional and governmental auditing organizations;

—the content, method of preparation, timing and format of reports by the Auditor General.

● (1640)

Those were the terms of reference. They completely fulfilled those terms of reference and the recommendations here. All that is left to be done is to implement them. There is no need at all for a royal commission which, as has been said yesterday and as I will repeat today, is nothing but a big stall.

Mr. Stollery: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As I understand it, we are now debating Bill C-19. I do not know why the hon. member is talking about the Auditor General's report.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: It is quite clear.

Mr. Stollery: The hon. member should be brought to order and asked to discuss the matter that is before us this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): It is very difficult for the Chair to make a decision as to whether or not the hon. member was addressing himself to the bill when he made reference to the Auditor General's report. However, I would ask hon. members to address their remarks to Bill C-19.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. Your ruling was quite proper and I would not want to argue with it, but I was listening to the speech of the hon. member and, as I understood it, he was dealing with the Auditor General's report in the light of Bill C-19 in which the government is seeking to save money, to restrain its spending. In effect, the hon. member is stating that in his report the Auditor General is saying to Canadians and to this parliament that the government, which asks so much of Canadian citizens, has been unable to restrain itself or control its spending.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): I hope the hon. member will understand that I did not mention any particular hon. member. I was asking all hon. members to address their remarks to Bill C-19.

Mr. McKenzie: During the lengthy debate on this bill reference has been made practically in every speech to the Auditor General's report which deals with government spending. That is what this is all about, and to prevent this matter from being discussed in the debate at this time would be quite ridiculous.

Restraint of Government Expenditures

The reason I want to comment on the former auditor general's report is to assist the government and to show it the many weaknesses in its operations, and to assist it in restraint in spending by showing it the financial mess in which it is now, and its poor accounting system. That is what I am here to do, to help it.

In his recent remarks Mr. Henderson was also trying to be helpful. He has written articles and made contributions on a continuous basis. We should listen to this man who is a very knowledgeable individual. This is what he wrote:

At the time the government was advancing hundreds of millions of dollars to underwrite Expo '67, I asked Mitchell Sharp, then the minister of finance, to submit the loans to parliament for approval. He finally did so but I never realized how strongly the Pearson government had opposed my request until, meeting several top deputy ministers by chance one day on Ottawa's Wellington Street, they began to kid me about my demands. One of them parodying C. D. Howe, said: "Hell, who's to stop us—those guys on the Hill?"

It is this attitude in the top echelons of the public service that explains why our MPs are given so little hard information about government spending. At the same time, cabinet has little patience with parliamentary questioning. It upsets the political and bureaucratic timetable, even though it seldom if ever alters the government's intentions. This is why more and more frequently now the Trudeau government provides to the House of Commons only the bare minimum of information about its proposed spending. It seems to consider it sufficient to conform to the various steps in the parliamentary process which, weighed down by the parliamentary timetable and the complexities of the spending details, means that few members of the House are able to ask meaningful questions.

Until we are provided with this type of information we will never be able to keep a check on the government's expenditures. With the rule changes introduced by the Liberal government of the day in 1969 which limited the examination of the estimates, the Liberals have trapped themselves with their own rule changes. They themselves do not even know what is going on. This is the paradox with which we are faced today. Therefore any information any member can contribute in this regard in the debate on Bill C-19 is useful. That is what this forum is for.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Henderson goes on to say:

The job of the chairman of each of the estimates committees of the House (who is carefully selected by the government) is to get departmental estimates approved as quickly as possible. Each spring we witness what amounts to a ballet or dance ritual in the committees—ministers opening the debates with policy pronouncements followed by their deputies closing them with a minimum of disturbance. In my view, it is high time the opposition accepted its responsibilities of opposing, of vigorously questioning, of demanding and securing information that the press will pick up and the public understand.

That is exactly what we in the Conservative party are doing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKenzie: The article goes on to read:

The Trudeau government's estimated cash requirements for 1966-67 amount to \$42 billion; out of the 95 departmental estimates, only 20 are lower than in 1975-76. The other 75 all demand more money.

The detail given to justify these huge increases in the estimates blue book is minimal indeed. It was cut back from the simpler presentation given prior to 1970-71 to reflect a system of "budgeting by programs", but the Treasury Board's definition of "programs" is essentially a departmental exercise—it does not, for instance, pull out and show separately the huge over-all costs of such