

No member who has sat on the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates feels that he could do a decent job. Recently a very distinguished Canadian said, "Do you know what was the most demeaning circumstances I have experienced in my life? It was appearing before a parliamentary committee." I said, "Do you know what is more demeaning? Being a member of the committee".

The manner in which our estimates operate is a disgrace. It is not that members are not trying hard, but the only committee which is working well is the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, because it has the benefit of the staff of the Auditor General. If that had not happened by random, because the Auditor General was looking at the Atomic Energy Commission, we would never have known the scandalous manner in which that Crown corporation was operating.

We ask Canadians to vote, pay their taxes and accept the proposition that \$50 billion will be spent. We are asking Canadians to do that, yet we do not have a system to examine how that money is spent. It is disgraceful. Any government which would allow that to happen for 15 years deserves to be thrown out.

I ask hon. members opposite to examine their consciences before saying that they have appeared on a committee on estimates or an expenditure committee and are able to say honestly that they were capable of doing their jobs under the present system. The committee system cannot function adequately until it has staff and is rid of the hangman, guillotine idea. Until we restore the idea that the estimates of some departments should be brought to the floor of the House of Commons, with unlimited time for examination, we will never be able to do what we are supposed to.

Why were we elected? Why are we here? We are reasonably well paid. We are here to perform a legislative function. We are the trustees of Canadians regarding the manner which their dollars are spent. We require reform in the operation of the House of Commons, and a fundamental commencement of that reform must be in the committee system and the examination of estimates. That is why I feel the motion before us is an important one, and that everyone should look at their consciences regarding the manner in which they vote.

The Auditor General reported that the finances of the Government of Canada are out of control. Ordinary people do not realize what is happening in this nation. How could this have happened? Why is there a deficit of approximately \$11 billion or \$12 billion? If we compare our deficit relating to budgetary expenses to that of the United States, we will find that it is four times higher. Our deficit is so large that the time for economic policy-making is almost gone. How was it possible to be so extravagant and unrealistic as to end up with an \$11 billion deficit in the country? Anyone who pretends that the system is operating, and therefore votes against this motion, is blind. The evidence is in front of us. The system is not operating. It is important and necessary that we change it.

The Auditor General said that the financial accounts are out of control. When he appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, he asked a question concerning the

number of Crown corporations. He asked how many Crown corporations there were. He did not even know how many there were. The Government of Canada does not know how many Crown corporations there are, and does not know what they are.

● (2142)

An hon. Member: When was the last time you were at the public accounts committee?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gillies: Here we go again.

An hon. Member: We have to wait for an hour before your members show up.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Shout, shout; that's all they can do.

Mr. Gillies: That is a real indication of the capability of those members over there. An hon. member asks how many committees I attend, and how many times I am there. Let me tell hon. members why attendance at committees is so poor. If anyone wants to know why committees are attended so poorly, let me tell him it is because committees do not work, because they are no good and because they are ineffective. That is why they are attended so poorly.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillies: If committees did what they were supposed to do, people would be there.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gillies: I am interested in saying to those people over there—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please.

Mr. Gillies: The only thing I can say to the members over there is that they will not be there very much longer.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I would suggest that hon. members extend the usual courtesy to the hon. member who has the floor.

Mr. Gillies: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear this sort of observation, and I say this in all seriousness, because hopefully those people will take the time to look at committees and will decide—

An hon. Member: Hopefully you will attend the public accounts committee.

Mr. Gillies: An hon. member says that hopefully I will come to the public accounts committee. Let me tell him that the