

Restraint of Government Expenditures

you would do then". Are these not the words of someone on the defensive, Mr. Speaker, of someone who is no longer quite sure of himself and what he is doing? No confident or self-assured person or government asks this defensive question so often and so plaintively of its opposition as have members opposite during this session.

As I have said, Bill C-19 is a negative bill. It does have the commendable purpose of restraining government expenditures, however, but the way it attempts to do this is unfortunate. It abandons, terminates, freezes, repeals, and in one way or another it hurts someone whether it be a mother trying to feed her family, the Canadian wheat grower, the Canadian manufacturer trying to develop a new industry or manufacturing process, or an unemployed young person. If spending restraint means that some people will have to bleed a little, as was the philosophy of the former president of the treasury board, now the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Chrétien), then this bill accomplishes that. The one party which all of this government's exercises in cutting expenditures never seems to touch, however, not even brush, let alone draw any blood, is itself.

Government spending in itself now consumes more than 40 per cent of the gross national product. Out of every \$10 that the government now spends, four dollars are spent on government. We in the Conservative party quite frankly do not think that it should take more than \$15 billion to govern a nation of some 22 million people. Members opposite should stop asking us what we would do and what is our policy. How could we possibly do worse than this government has in eight years, Mr. Speaker? It is obvious what we would do, what any rational person would do at this stage of our history. A new government would stop spending money. It would stop spending money on more and more government. It would stop spending money on its own aggrandizement.

The Prime Minister's office presently employs almost 500 people and spends just slightly under \$20 million annually. Yet in this entire country there are less than 25 million people. We are not one of the big powers of the world. We are not a super power with a population in the hundreds of millions, like the United States, the Soviet Union or China. How can such a huge PMO with such a large expenditure possibly be justified for a country this size, anytime, least of all when we are supposed to be practicing restraint?

In eight years the present government has succeeded in making Canada the most bureaucratic, regimented state in the entire free world. There are probably some countries today with bigger government bureaucracies than Canada, but I doubt if there is one other country anywhere that has as much government per capita as this one. Visitors who come here from such countries as West Germany and Brazil and who have reason to be familiar with the heavy hand of government, are absolutely astounded at the extent of government control and regulation over the lives of Canadians. No matter who we are, where we live, or what we do, the heavy, unfeeling hand of government intrudes into our lives.

[Mr. Masniuk.]

The list of government bureaucracies, for instance, is practically endless, and I doubt that it could even be matched by the Soviet Union, a country with more than 20 times our population and one which has never made any secret of its desire to control its citizens. We have the AIB, the CRTC, the CTC, the CMC, CMHC, DREE, the Canadian Wheat Board, Customs and Excise, Environment Canada, the NEB, the NCC, DOC, EMR, FIRA, MOT, Revenue Canada, Statistics Canada, and the UIC. These are only some of the bureaucracies which presently regulate our lives.

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This government's sudden belief in a less interventionist style of government as suggested in the throne speech is very commendable but, quite frankly, I just do not believe it. Such declarations of good intent by this government clash with the harsh reality which is that almost any bureaucracy one picks as an example, whether the AIB, the DOT or the CRTC, is daily growing bigger and intruding more and more into the activities of Canadians.

These bureaucracies spend money, massively, by the millions. I really wish it were possible to say that the lives of Canadians are the better for it, but that does not appear to be the case. Federal bureaucracies seem to be particularly adept at being insensitive and inept. Maybe they cannot be otherwise, but we in the Conservative party think that they can at least try. It has been Conservative policy for a long time that we should try to make the heavy and unfeeling hand of government more sensitive to the real needs of the people of the country. There really is no mystery about this policy and the leader of our party has been saying this since he was chosen leader last February; the Progressive Conservative party has been saying this for at least as long as I have been a member of this House, since 1972.

DREE provides a good example of a sometimes insensitive bureaucracy. A particular case occurred in my constituency this summer when a large national food chain received a substantial DREE grant to establish a food processing plant in the city of Portage la Prairie. Of course I am pleased that a new industry was located in the southern part of my riding. However, the northern two thirds of my riding, one of the most economically depressed areas in Manitoba and one of the most disadvantaged areas in the whole country, has not received any DREE assistance in many years. My party has a policy in the field of regional development, as in every other field. Our regional development policy is to have the instruments of such a program operate in a way more appropriate to what is supposed to be its goal, the alleviation of regional disparity.

An appropriate and related topic in any discussion of government spending cutbacks and one which is very important to western Canada certainly, and really to all Canadians, is that of transportation. This is one area in which any criticism from the other side about our supposed lack of policy certainly smacks of hypocrisy. The government does not have a transportation policy and has not had one for years. Its approach to the whole subject has been a series of reactions to what it