

mismanagement of the public's funds and, therefore, because of the failure of this government truly to be responsible or to exercise ministerial responsibility, we see no alternative but to accept and strongly advocate the prescription of the Auditor General, namely, to put in place a Comptroller General with the necessary authority to fulfil the functions as defined in paragraph 2.15 of the Auditor General's report of 1976.

● (1712)

The other argument used internally to try to dissuade the House or the internal decision makers from the idea of a Comptroller General, making sure that the Comptroller General never in fact has any authority, is that you are really not talking about very much money after all. It is really peanuts. If we had brought in a Comptroller General and he really did his job, he might save a few tens, hundreds, or maybe millions, and what is that in terms of a \$50 billion budget? That is the argument on the other side.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Andre:** It used to be said that if you looked after the dimes, the dollars would look after themselves. In this case, if you look after the millions, the billions will take care of themselves. More important than the amount of money, and I agree in terms of a \$50 billion budget sometimes \$10 million, \$20 million, \$30 million or \$100 million, does not have that much impact, is the attitude of disrespect for money which the public has. That is extremely important.

As a member of parliament I am running into a situation that I am sure honest members opposite would have to admit exists. There is a reluctance to pay tax. Because they read and know about the \$2 million given to Shaul Eisenberg, the \$17 million spent here, blown there, poured down the drain here or poured down the drain there, there is a genuine reluctance on the part of people to pay taxes.

Accountants tell me they are being asked by their clients to do things in terms of their tax returns which, if they had suggested them to their clients ten years ago, the clients would have fired them. There is a change in attitude. They feel the government has so little respect for their tax dollars that there is a sort of gamesmanship building up whereby they will do their best to prevent the government from getting any of it. They will keep back as much as they can. That is a change in attitude in ten years. Ten years ago the feeling was that a citizen had a responsibility to contribute his share. That responsibility was looked upon as an honour, one of the privileges of living in a free society.

The other aspect of mismanagement and wastage of money which is having a terrible effect upon the body politic is the contempt the public is beginning to feel toward government and politicians. They watch the manner in which their money is being poured down the drain. They read of wastage in the Auditor General's report. They read that the situation in terms of financial management is serious, grossly inadequate. That causes them to have serious contempt toward the government and toward the politicians because we get lumped in with the

government, in their view. That is not healthy for the country and our democratic system.

We hear from cabinet and senior officials comments such as "Even in industry things are not handled properly. Occasionally something is spilled, but so what? It is not very important in the whole scheme of things. It is not that much money." We hear ministers and deputies talk as though it is their money. They talk as though the money involved belongs to the government. They say the government tries to do a good job of spending, but if they spill a little bit here and there, corporations do the same.

It is not like industry where the money belongs to the corporation. If they want to spill it, that is their business. Here the money does not belong to the government, but to the taxpayers. The government is merely the trustee of those funds. As trustee, it does not have the right to state that it will sacrifice a little efficiency for speed, flexibility, and all those things that senior officials and cabinet ministers want. It does not have that right when acting as trustee of the public's money.

We need ongoing, regular, day-to-day precautions, procedures and control mechanisms to ensure that this money is treated as it is, namely, money held by government in trust for taxpayers. It does not belong to the government, to those who play with it. When they start thinking that way, we are in trouble.

Colleagues from my party will have more to say about the government's failure to manage its responsibilities properly and, indeed Mr. Speaker, we in this party have a considerable number of recommendations to make to the government on ways in which it could reorganize itself, and indeed divest itself of some of its responsibilities so that it might better manage the ones that remain. I will not take up much time in the House in my remarks but I do indicate to the President of the Treasury Board, or his parliamentary secretary, that while we intend to support this legislation at second reading because we strongly believe in the necessity for a Comptroller General, we are most unhappy with the fact that this bill does not provide a definition of that function, and in committee we will be demanding that additional clauses be added to the bill so that Mr. Rogers, when he assumes his responsibility, has the necessary legislative authority to perform this most vital function which he is called upon to perform.

Without legislative authority, there is one chance in ten that the Comptroller General will be able to perform the job he is called upon to perform. The cabinet and the senior civil service do not want a Comptroller General and resisted it mightily, and only the overwhelming weight of public opinion caused them to rescind on this resistance.

**An hon. Member:** How do you know that?

**Mr. Andre:** I keep my ears open. You should do the same. In the interest of proceeding expeditiously with this bill in committee, I wish to repeat something for the benefit of the parliamentary secretary. I hope he will take it to his boss who, for some reason, did not think it necessary to be here when this