

● (2120)

There is a further provision under clause 165 dealing with the question of privilege respecting a psychiatric assessment. While the bill leaves the question of solicitor-client privilege to the common law, it sets out a new professional privilege with respect to statements made to a qualified medical practitioner during the course of a court-ordered psychiatric observation, examination or assessment. I am sure that this extension of privilege, though limited in scope, will be welcomed by the medical profession.

Clauses 193 to 195 of the bill deal with disclosure of government information. When the Uniform Evidence Act was under consideration, the Deputy Minister of Justice informed the Uniform Law Conference that Parliament already had plans to deal with this subject in the context of the Access to Information Act, and that, to the extent that there was an inconsistency between the provisions of the Uniform Evidence Act and the Access to Information Act in this regard, the latter would have to prevail. The Canada Evidence Bill, therefore, adopts verbatim the evidentiary provisions of the recently passed Access to Information Act.

Honourable senators, this concludes my summary of the highlights of the Canada Evidence Bill. Although there are a number of other matters of detail, which I am sure honourable senators will wish to consider, they do not raise matters of principle.

What we have before us may not be perfect but, then, no legislation ever is. It can be said, however, that it is as close to a satisfactory piece of legislation as we are likely to see. It represents the culmination of years of effort by scholars and practitioners in this country and elsewhere to whom, I feel, a great deal of respect is due for their considerable efforts in this regard.

Having the support of all the provinces, the bill should receive our most serious consideration. It provides a good system to give an effective and fair balance between the needs of the state and the rights and protection of the individual. I would urge, therefore, that this bill be given early and favourable attention by this chamber.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

On motion of Senator Asselin, debate adjourned.

THE ESTIMATES, 1982-83

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE ON SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B)—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on supplementary estimates (B) laid before Parliament for the fiscal year ending 31st March, 1983.

Hon. Douglas D. Everett: Honourable senators, the report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1983, is contained as an appendix in the *Minutes of the*

[Senator Lewis.]

Proceedings of the Senate for Thursday, November 25. The report was tabled by Senator Leblanc, the deputy chairman, last Thursday and was also printed as an appendix to the *Debates of the Senate* of that date.

The supplementary estimates (B) bring the total expenditures of the federal government, for the fiscal year so far, to \$79.6 billion, this in the light of a projected deficit by the Minister of Finance of \$23,550 million.

I do not propose to deal in detail with the report, which is straightforward and can be read by all honourable senators. However, I should like to examine briefly some implications of the spending of \$79.6 billion and the projected deficit of \$23.5 billion.

When one looks at federal government spending in Canada, one must bear in mind that transfer payments to individuals and provinces, the interest on the national debt and expenditures on defence form 80 per cent of the total expenditures of the federal government. It follows then that all other expenditures of all departments and crown corporations aggregate 20 per cent of the total spending. You must bear those figures and those percentages in mind when considering the question of reductions in spending.

Obviously, there could be considerably more efficiency in government, but to a large extent that efficiency would apply to little more than 20 per cent of the total expenditures. If you were able to achieve a 10 per cent more efficient operation, you would, in fact, be achieving a 2 per cent reduction in overall expenditures. That is not to be sneezed at when those expenditures are in the neighbourhood of \$80 billion. However, people who say that the deficit can be removed by making government more efficient are probably fooling themselves. It is true that the interest on the national debt will reduce as we lower the level of inflation, but probably the most effective area for the reduction of expenditures by the federal government relates to transfer payments. As honourable senators well know, that is a very politically difficult area in which to reduce expenditures.

One would have to grapple with the ending of certain programs for which there is a large constituency in the country; one would have to grapple with the issue of universality—whether programs should apply generally or whether they should apply to specific need; and one would have to grapple with the issue of whether we index our programs to the rate of inflation as we do now, or whether we cap the increase in the expenditure below that rate.

Although these are areas where we can make major reductions in expenditure, they raise the problem of reducing expenditures in a democratic government, which is particularly difficult.

Although I am very much in favour of reducing expenditures, I am concerned about the glib talk put forward by the critics concerning what should and could be done. If they were in government, they would not have the fortitude to do those things; in fact, if they tried, they would not be in government for long.