

*Control of Public Funds*

And I would even add this: when the Auditor General expressed himself rather severely over the last few years, he was threatened with dismissal because he was too cumbersome for the government.

Surely you have noticed that this year again the size of the report is bigger, that the remarks are ever more numerous and the warnings ever more to the point. But nothing changes except the thickness of the report. Besides, this explains why the Auditor General resigned from his most important position which is, in my opinion, the most important of our administration system. Mr. Henderson is simply fed up of talking to walls. Today, the official opposition is protesting against government actions by introducing a motion worded as follows:

That this House, protesting the Government's continuing take-over of Parliamentary control of public money and the Government's mismanagement in spending escalating public revenues, warns that immediate and decisive action must be taken to restore control of public funds to Parliament.

When you speak about Parliament control of public funds you wonder who surrenders this control to the government. I would immediately reply that it gets this control from the laws themselves. I have always noticed that after passing a law which has been studied for one or two months, you find on the last page a small subsection stating that under any circumstances the minister may act on his own. Therefore let us not wonder why laws are broken. After lengthy discussions a law is passed and, in the end, the minister is the master of the situation.

I could give dozens of examples. Let us take the Regional Development Incentives Act, let us consider the distribution of funds by the Regional Economic Expansion Department; this was again noted during the last election campaign: \$500 million were distributed left and right provided it replenished the election coffers and collected voters. Why did the minister do it? Because it was authorized by law.

In my opinion, as long as the matter is not seriously considered and the legislation is not given sufficient authority, we will continue to hear those criticisms against the government, this one or another. During past years, criticisms were not directed more against this government than the previous one. But I suggest that our legislation has too many loose ends and that we leave too much scope to politicians who use it to play politics.

What about bad administration? Again, the reason why the administration is often deficient is purely political. The aim of the administration is not common good but the next elections. Any project must be electorally profitable. Once again this applies to our successive governments. It is unfortunate, but as long as we are governed by the electoral fund, we will have bad administration.

• (1440)

We have revenues as well as expenditures and we notice on page 23 of the report from the Auditor General the statement of our revenues, and we see that they increase from year to year. In 1970-71 they were \$12,803,051,000, and \$14,226,558,000 in 1971-72. Compared with those revenues we have expenditures of \$13,182,143,000 in 1970-71 and \$14,840,865,000 in 1971-72.

[Mr. Gauthier (Roberval).]

I think, Mr. Speaker, that when you look at those figures you come to the conclusion that a serious government should first consider spending according to its revenues. And we see, particularly in recent years, that the increase in expenditures occurred mainly in the field of services, that is to say the public service. The expenditures for the public service nearly doubled in the last two or three years and we are getting fewer services than ever.

I think that those areas should be looked at to see if we could not find a way to reduce expenditures in order to balance the budgets and avoid regular deficits and hiding or transferring funds so the people will not come down on us.

I have here, for example, the figures for the amounts allocated to the commissions which were established. I have always said that often a royal commission was a smoke-screen to hide government scandals or to prevent a problem from being considered. In fact, it is the only *raison d'être* of those commissions and \$36,738,000 were spent in 1972 in that respect.

I think that when the Auditor General draws the attention of this House on certain things a serious government should at least listen a bit and consider a more concrete reform.

In view of the cautious and up-to-the-point comments of the Auditor General, and there are 178 of them in his last report, it seems to me that if a government is concerned with the well-being of the people, instead of hicking back as it does it should tackle the problem to try and right the monstrosities, if only that.

I wish I had the time to read each one of those remarks, not to convince the minister or present government—it is far too concerned with camouflaging its bad administration—but to inform the people, and tell them where their income tax really goes, and that the government could not care less about their opinion and well-being.

I have already said in this House that if private enterprise were managed the way the government is, it would not last six months. Bad administration poses no problem to the government: all it has to do is increase taxes. The taxpayer will always be the one who pays for administrative blunders. In his report the Auditor General denounces errors, voluntary or otherwise. Here are a few:

Weakening of parliamentary control.

Non-lapsing balances of votes available for spending in subsequent years.

I will skip some and stop at the following:

Faulty computer system planning.

Computer purchased on the instalment plan.

I did ask a question in the House about those computers because I suspected shady maneuvers as there often are with big building contracts. I have always wondered why the government always rents large blocks of offices. They are to be found all over Ottawa and Hull, built by companies that are friends of government and negotiated 20-year leases with the government. These buildings will be paid for in 20 years, and the government will still be paying rent. I wonder if these people have any administrative sense.