

(Mr. Nielsen) for moving this motion because I think that in parliament now is the time when we should be turning our attention to how we can ensure that the Canadian taxpayer gets value for his money.

Over the course of the afternoon and the early part of this evening I listened to the various participants in this debate. I was particularly pleased to find that the first speaker for the government side was the new Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations (Mr. Reid). He is a minister for whom I have a very high regard and to whom I sent a congratulatory letter at the time of his appointment to cabinet. I indicated that I was pleased to see that a person with his perspective, having sat on the back benches, having been concerned about the role of the backbencher in parliament and ensuring that parliament was functional and doing its job, should be elevated to a post of high responsibility.

I always thought that it was axiomatic that when you raised a person to a high elevation he could see far, that his view would be much better. Instead it now appears that upon the elevation of the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River to the cabinet his view is obscured in the clouds and he has lost sight of the issues which concerned him when he was down toiling in the vineyards with the rest of us.

In listening to the government speakers today, the general consensus seems to be that really the problems are not that bad and that controls by parliament on the executive are better now than they ever were. Anyone who has spent time in this institution, who has spoken to members of parliament from all sides of the House, however, will be aware of the frustrations, the discontent and the general feeling that this institution is not discharging its responsibility when it comes to ensuring that the taxpayers' money is well spent.

In the six years I have been here I have detected a growing sense of frustration on the part of members of parliament who feel that there must be fundamental changes made in terms of structure and in terms of the attitude of those who determine how we conduct our business in this House. The minister for federal-provincial relations made the point this afternoon that at the time the reforms were brought in in 1968 they were passed by unanimous consent and there was no dissenting voice. I was not here at that time and the minister can correct me if I am wrong, but I am told by my colleagues who were here that they were presented with an ultimatum by the majority government of the day that either we agree to a watered down package or else the government would use their majority to put the whole package through.

I would like to indicate my strong feeling, after six years here, that the rules have not worked well for parliament, that we do not have the information we need to do our jobs, and that the mechanisms are not in place to ensure that the taxpayers of Canada can rest confident that their money is being well spent.

My colleagues who have spoken before me dealt with a number of aspects of this particular problem as, for example, the way in which rule changes have affected parliament's ability to discharge its obligations. My colleague for Grenville-

### *Parliament*

Carleton (Mr. Baker) put his case very eloquently, and anyone listening to his presentation would be impressed with the sincerity with which he made his case and the veracity of the arguments he put forth.

My purpose this evening is twofold. I want to talk about what the Auditor General had to say about parliament's ability to control expenditures and, secondly, to indicate what some of his investigations have shown in terms of the ability of parliament to keep an eye on how the taxpayers' money is being spent.

Government members have stressed the fact that there is not the former abundance of horror stories in the current Auditor General's report and that he is not illustrating as many individual cases in which there has been striking waste of the taxpayers' money as in previous auditor general reports. The point that these members do not make, and for some reason they overlook it, is that the Auditor General's 1978 report consists of 750 pages of condemnations of systematic problems. The Auditor General has conducted isolated audits on selected parts of government activities and has found in virtually every case that the government's control mechanisms or evaluation procedures have been found wanting. He has sounded the very clear alarm that unless government gains control over expenditures, unless we ensure that those responsible for directing the government today have the mechanisms in place which are necessary to evaluate the way the taxpayers' money is being spent, to determine whether it is being spent wisely and whether programs are being run efficiently and effectively, then the taxpayer should be concerned about how his money is being used by the government.

This report is the one hundredth report by an auditor general. As I have said, it contains 750 pages in which the Auditor General chronicles ways in which millions of dollars of the taxpayers' money is being wasted. He mentions individual examples of waste and also, even more importantly, systemic problems where the system conspires towards waste, encourages it and discourages the government from showing due concern in spending the taxpayers' money. He also makes recommendations on how we in parliament and those on the treasury benches can act in an attempt to get control of the public purse.

During my six years here there has been a common thread running through auditor generals' reports, and that is that Canadians have no reason to be confident, with the budget being the size that it is today, that their money is being wisely spent. Since this is the one hundredth Auditor General's report, I thought that it would be interesting to refer to the first auditor general's report which was released to parliament in 1879, and I was able to find a copy of it in the library. I thought it would be useful to see whether or not there was a common thread running from the 1978 report back to the report of 1879, or whether the problems dealt with by that auditor general were very different from the ones the Auditor General faces today. I was intrigued to see at the beginning of the report that there was one problem which seems to be a perpetual one, and that is the debate between the Auditor