

Estimates

The minister wants to try to tell us that he has real restraint in effect in government. We know different, and we will be pointing that out when these estimates go to committee.

What else can I say with this short notice? I have a newspaper here from St. John's, Newfoundland. It came up today, Thursday, February 26. *The Daily News* says this: "Feds to fund synchrolift". This is the synchrolift in my district of St. John's West that the federal government has refused to fund. It has advised the province and Canadian National that it will not provide these moneys that were supposed to be in the estimates last year and this year. This daily paper printed down in St. John's in the early hours of this morning said they have had a look at the estimates. Tom Sullivan of *The Daily News*, special from Ottawa, said that there is \$11.5 million in the estimates for the synchrolift for the dockyard in St. John's. This will show you how accurate these estimates are because I will make the prediction right now that if that \$11.5 million is in the estimates, it is not going to be spent on a synchrolift in St. John's; it will be spent on other little projects, public works projects in Canada, but not on the synchrolift. But if that turns out not to be the case, then I think that this is the one item in the estimates that I can look at and say it would be money well spent and the government would be carrying out solemn commitments and pledges it has made in the past.

It also has to be noted that the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board have to get together because the Post Office is going to have a further deficit this year. The figure is over \$500 million. I do not have it right at my fingertips at the moment. Yes, here it is; no, it is not.

An hon. Member: Is it?

Mr. Crosbie: I am sure you will forgive me while I look to get the exact amount. There are so many papers. They have been pawed over by so many people before we ever got them that I cannot find them right at the moment.

An hon. Member: You are always mixed up.

Mr. Crosbie: I ask hon. gentlemen for patience. Here it is. The Post Office is going to cost more to run this year—1981-82—and it is going to wind up with a \$557 million deficit. When we look at the budget speech of October 28, we see in that budget speech the statement that they are not including any spending on a deficit for the Post Office for the year 1981-82 because they say the Post Office is going to break even, it is not going to cost the government anything; and that is why the Minister of Finance in his budget speech explains that he has no expenditures under the Post Office, yet three and a half months later, what is to happen? It is going to have a \$557 million deficit.

All of this is to say that we cannot take this statement by the President of the Treasury Board seriously. It is a con game. It is a gigantic shell game on the people of Canada. It is a charade. I only hope he comes through with his vastly improved estimates so that people will be in a position to understand them more easily, if they can understand them at

all, when they are presented. But to date I am afraid he has been a very, very great disappointment in his position, which he has further added to by his behaviour in the last 24 hours.

So these are our first preliminary comments. My hon. colleague who is our critic on the Treasury Board will have a lot more and a lot more detail as to what is wrong with these estimates when he gets a chance. I assume we are going to have a chance, after the New Democratic Party has made its statement, to ask questions of the minister and get some more detail on this, but it is a disappointing charade. It is bad news for Canada. The spending is up. The debt is up. The government is not meeting its commitments. It is based on the same false assumptions in the budget. It will not help the economy. It will not help the Canadian dollar. It will further depress it because the evidence in here is that the government does not care about inflation and that it has no real fiscal plan. It is just lying there. The government is just drifting. The government is on a gradualist course of action. As I said last night, the government is like shaver soap. It does not sink, it does not float; it is just lying there becalmed in water. The only one doing anything—and he is doing a lot of damage to the economy—is the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

It is a great disappointment. I am afraid there is no way we can congratulate the minister on his performance or on the detail he has given us today.

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the tabling of the 1981-82 estimates in this House on behalf of the New Democratic Party. I am not nearly as disappointed with the estimates as I am with the conduct of this House over the past 24 hours. I expected to be responding some time yesterday around four o'clock. I find myself responding a day later at five o'clock because of an error in judgment made by the Liberals and because of the activities of the Conservative Party which followed after that.

● (1710)

I would like to say that I am pleased with two other aspects, besides the tabling of the 1981-82 estimates. I am pleased with the new form of the estimates, Part 1, which was brought before us today, the government spending plan. I would like to say a few words about the second part, being the new form of the estimates which will be before us in the coming years. I would like to commend the past public accounts committees of both governments for the work they have done in making Parliament more aware so that government is more responsive and accountable to the people of Canada. I am looking forward to the new form of the estimates which are to come before us. As I said, I would like to commend the work which has been done through the public accounts committee, the office of the Auditor General and the new office of the Comptroller General, which has done a lot of work in bringing about the revised form of the estimates.

I am looking forward to the government's expenditure programs, the estimates themselves, once they are revised substantially, and the guide which will go with it. I think these