

which would permit this \$800 million ceiling to be increased. The minister was making statements which, in effect, intimated that \$800 million was the limit to which the government was entitled to go.

I want to say that I disagree to some extent, and in some ways, on various issues with the minister. I admire him. At least he had the courage of his conviction. He stayed with his case, whether or not it was a good case. The case he made, which was the case of the government, was that all of them must share the responsibility. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) told me the other day in response to a question I asked him on this issue, he shared in the decision; it was a collective decision of the cabinet. What happened then? The former minister was made a scapegoat; he was ditched; he was discharged. He was the man who had the courage, rightly or wrongly, to stick up for his principles. I give him credit for having the best motives, and he made a very good case. I disagree with part of it, but not all of it. But the responsibility for this case was shared by his friends opposite. When this disaster came about, what do we find with respect to him? He is ditched. He is made the scapegoat, and he is thrown out.

• (1620)

I suggest to you, Sir, that there was a meeting of minds between different members of the government before this magic date of September 1 was picked. They knew what the situation was. They knew what they faced with regard to this fund. They knew the honest, the honourable, the decent, the only method which should have been or could have been employed by a responsible parliamentary government, which predicates its life on the basis of financial responsibility to the people of this country and to the members of this House. Such a government would have said, "Here is the situation. We were wrong. We miscalculated. We now ask this House to help us put it right." And, Mr. Speaker, the House was in session at the time. We were brought together for a special purpose. That was the time when the government, as any proper government would have done, should have beat its breast, told the truth and said, "Because of these facts we ask for an amendment to this legislation, or we are bringing in a supplementary estimate to cover this amount."

Such a course might have meant a delay in the election, but I assume that what happened was that members of the government who were aware of this, and there was certainly a collective awareness, said, "If we disclose these facts, if we tell the truth—" of course that comes hard for them in any event, politically speaking I want to add because, Mr. Speaker, I am putting this on a political basis—"in the light of what we have said before, and in the light of the facts it would be disastrous for us politically." So, they saw fit to hide the facts, to hide the truth, to call the election, and to allow members of this House to depart. They saw fit to allow the electors of the country to go to the polls without an awareness of what the true situation was. Any government which embarks upon a course of conduct of that nature has an awful gall to come into this House, as the minister did today, and now ask to be given a blank cheque. That is precisely what the government is asking.

If any rational, intelligent and unbiased jury were asked about this situation, they could bring in no other verdict

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than that the government was guilty of incredible stupidity or deceit, or both. I suppose this was probably one of the reasons which tipped the scales in favour of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) calling the election. Otherwise, if he had seen fit to come back later last fall, to meet the House again in the last parliament, these facts by then would have been known and he would have had to face that situation. Instead he said, "We will call an election and the election will be over and done with before any of this becomes known." That is virtually what happened. The election was over before the government was compelled to tell the truth—or part of the truth. I do not think we have got it all yet.

Some question also arises on the issue of legality. I want to conclude this part of my remarks by saying that this cynical, devious government wanted an election on the most favourable terms it could get. If the government had acted legally, it would have meant full disclosure of this financial debacle; it would have meant telling the press, the public and the people that they had badly miscalculated and were guilty of the most scandalous incompetence. So, the government and the establishment which surrounds it, have become increasingly authoritarian and have discovered smooth and adept ways of ignoring all financial guidelines.

Not so long ago I was discussing this with someone who should know well what the score was. We were talking about the situation some years ago when the predecessor of this government had substantially exceeded or was going to exceed by some tens of millions of dollars, a program which had a statutory limit laid down by parliament. This official said to the person involved, who knew about the excess and in fact was responsible for it, "Don't you think you are going to get caught in this? Don't you think that at some time or other this will be brought back to you"? And that person turned his thumb in the direction of parliament and replied, "Who is going to catch us—those fellows up there?" That is the position, that is the attitude we now find increasingly in the government and in those who work for the government at the highest levels. We can ignore the guidelines, ignore parliament, ignore the financial responsibility; we can do what we want to do, and they will never catch up to us.

Perhaps I belong to an old fashioned school, Mr. Speaker, but I believe there is a strong case to be made for the fact that the taxpayers of this country are entitled to have the most scrupulous adherence, in matters of finance and taxation, to the guidelines laid down by this parliament,—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: —and that anybody, government or not, who exceeds those guidelines deliberately must be brought to trial by public opinion.

What about the question of Governor General's warrants and legality? Yesterday the Auditor General, in a very full and complete statement, went back into the history of how this particular process had evolved. He particularly dealt with the situation from 1958 on because the present—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is in difficulty, and I think many members of the House realize whence