

Auditor General

Mr. Baldwin: It was hidden several months before then.

Mr. Chrétien: It was put aside at his request. We think the new Auditor General was rational in wanting to look at the situation and at the report. Hon. members opposite want the Auditor General to do the work of the opposition, not to act like an Auditor General. I do not think it is proper to have an outside officer look at the expenditures of government to judge whether parliament sets the right priorities. The role of the Auditor General is that of a judge. He must look into government expenditures and determine if money was spent according to the laws of the land. The laws of the land are passed by parliament, and we follow the wishes of parliament.

The hon. member spoke about wasteful spending, but in his half-hour speech he did not raise a single instance of wasteful spending.

Mr. Baldwin: If the Auditor General were a judge, many people would be in jail.

Mr. Chrétien: I am President of the Treasury Board and have many friends in this House. I have yet to see a member of parliament, especially from the opposition, come to me and suggest that I should cut expenditures in his particular area. They all come to me and ask me to intercede with the Department of Public Works and see that a wharf or facility, and so on, is built in their area.

An hon. Member: You are talking about government members.

Mr. Chrétien: No; the opposition is exactly the same. It is amazing how they want you to spend money on this and that—

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, as I am entitled to, and point out to the minister that on two occasions recently we moved motions in this House to reduce government expenditures but the government voted them down.

Mr. Reid: The motions involved ministers' salaries.

● (1730)

Mr. Chrétien: The Conservative House leader made an unbelievable speech today. He did not make one single point on the basis of this report suggesting anything to the government on the basis of the Wilson report. He did not take a single one of the recommendations and suggest what should be done. He spoke only in generalities and never came near to being constructive, as an opposition should be.

That is why, when the great choice is put before the people of Canada, even though we are not perfect they take a gamble on us rather than try that other gang over there, because they know those people cannot put their minds to a problem and come up with a constructive proposition.

Of course the government spends a lot of money. Earlier today I listened to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) suggesting that the equipment in the hands of our men in Europe was no damned good. I am not an expert on these matters, but I am certain that if we took

[Mr. Chrétien.]

measures to buy new planes, or guns, or whatever, the opposition would accuse the government of wasting money. They should face the implications of their own speeches. However, because they are so much in contradiction with themselves, no one takes them seriously.

Today we are considering government expenditures. I would remind hon. members that the government has no control over most of these expenditures; it is the House of Commons which controls them. For example, if I wanted to cut one cent from the old age pension I could not do it. I wouldn't do it, of course. But don't let hon. members opposite blame me because I am not cutting such expenditures; there is not a single man on the opposition side who would vote for a reduction in the old age pension and all those other measures. The same goes for any other programs of that kind which have been passed into law. The so-called strong executive we hear so much about has no control over these expenditures which were voted by the House of Commons. So the opposition should stop this nonsense saying that the government is spending \$28 billion. Yes, we are spending \$28 billion, but the portion of that expenditures over which we have direct control is very small.

When people talk about the take of the federal government in relation to the share taken by others, there are a few things I should like to tell them. The national accounts show a totally different profile of federal government spending trends than the motion implies. In 1974 only 6.1 cents in every dollar was spent on the purchase of goods and services and capital formation, compared with 8.5 cents 20 years earlier. This hardly seems like the prescription of a power-hungry executive arm of government. In that same period when the rate of these types of expenditures was increasing by more than a quarter in relation to gross national product, the provinces were in the process of doubling their expenditures in these areas.

Mr. Baldwin: Prodded by you!

Mr. Chrétien: Since when are we running the provinces?

Mr. Baldwin: All the time.

An hon. Member: We wish we were.

Mr. Chrétien: Yet it is the federal government which is characterized as the villain by the opposition. This is precisely the area of federal expenditure—goods, services, and capital formation—which seems to be attacked day after day in this House as having gone wildly out of control.

But what, hon. members may ask, happens to all the rest of the money which is collected in taxes if only 6.1 cents of every dollar goes to direct federal expenditures like national defence, physical works of all kinds, public works, salaries and the like? Those items totalled only \$8.3 billion in 1974, and the central government taxed Canadians over \$29 billion. The simple answer is that this parliament and its predecessors have committed themselves in various ways to improving the degree of social justice and equity for all Canadians by guaranteeing certain minimum levels of resources to ensure, as far as possible, that none of us thrives unduly at the expense of a less fortunate neigh-