

consultation on them with hon. members, government departments and others. If general acceptance is evident, my proposal would be to select several departments to present pilot projects of a new estimates format in parallel with their regular presentations for 1980-1981. These pilot projects would provide the occasion for further study and discussion in parliament and its committees. Then we could move forward to introduce progressively a totally reformed estimates package which would incorporate the requirements identified by hon. members. But let us make no mistake: old form of the estimates or new, the message is the same. The government has demonstrated that its present expenditure plans meet all of its commitments. The record has shown that we not only plan to meet them but that we implement and control our expenditures accordingly.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, last year in reply to the then president of the treasury board and his statement, I made the observation that the minister was employing a lot of flimflam, in the manner in which he presented his data, to try and create the impression the government was doing a lot better than it was. Compared to the present President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Buchanan), his immediate predecessor was an example of openness and honesty.

This is the first time an opposition critic of the Treasury Board has not been given a copy of the minister's remarks in advance. We have not been given any copy. There was a press briefing at ten o'clock, a lock-up for the press. We asked permission to attend and we were denied such permission.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Is that a responsible government?

Mr. Andre: Last year the then president of the treasury board invited myself and hon. members of the New Democratic and Social Credit parties to his office at 12 noon on the day he presented the estimates. He gave us a copy of the blue book, the book entitled "How Your Tax Dollar is Spent", plus a copy of his remarks and the press kit. We were asked to embargo them until three o'clock, which request we honoured. We were provided with approximately 2½ hours to study the material in order to be able to respond in some depth, so that the public and members of the press would receive a true, balanced perspective to make their own judgment on what should be reported after being given the two points of view.

This year at 1.15 p.m. we were invited in for sandwiches. A senior official of the Treasury Board presented a half hour of cooked data and charts, selected data along with the sandwiches. At approximately 1.50 p.m. we were informed we were not allowed to take anything out of the room. We were not allowed to take copies of the blue book, the book entitled "How Your Tax Dollar is Spent" or the information on the chart.

Mr. Nowlan: Shame.

Main Estimates

Mr. Andre: The President of the Treasury Board has the gall to stand and say that he accepts the recommendation of the Auditor General for a form of the estimates. He does not even know what the Auditor General is talking about.

Mr. Buchanan: I did not say that. The hon. member can read what I said.

Mr. Andre: The entire purpose of the Auditor General's recommendation was to make the spending process more open, to disclose to the public and the House the government's true spending plans; not to cook things so that a lopsided view of the government's intentions are presented in a manner which precludes any criticism on the day they are presented. Flimflam is too light a word to use in this instance.

Mr. Buchanan: The hon. member would be inarticulate without it.

Mr. Andre: For a moment I should like to deal with the global figure of \$52.6 billion. How was that figure produced?

Mr. Martin: Add up the totals of the departments.

Mr. Andre: There are the main estimates, budgetary and non-budgetary, reserves for supplementaries and some estimates of lapses. This year the government is estimating the lapses will be \$1,217 million. Last year they amounted to \$1 billion, so the figure is more than \$200 million larger this year than last year. This year they are estimating \$1,350 million as reserves for supplementaries. Last year the figure was \$1,550 million, so there is another convenient \$200 million change in the figures.

● (1530)

Using the same estimate last year that the government is using this year for lapses and supplementary reserves, the figure projected for the coming year is not \$52,600 million but rather \$53 billion. The projected increase in percentage terms this year, using the same basis the government used last year, is 9.7 per cent, a larger increase than last year. The claim by the minister that in fact we are doing better this year than last year is a bunch of nonsense. It is arrived at by cooking the books. It is arrived at by doing the very thing the Auditor General said should not be done if the government is to bring honesty and openness into the spending process. Obviously that is something this minister does not believe is important. Why do things honestly and openly if it is politically safer to be devious and hide things? That is the approach he has taken.

I did not receive a copy of the minister's comments, although it is the custom in this place for ministers to give the opposition critics such copies in advance. This is the first minister I am aware of to violate that tradition or practice. In his remarks the minister talks about what a good job the government is doing in terms of reducing the national debt as a percentage of gross national product. If we look at the figures as he indicated them we will see that in 1946, at the end of the war, the national debt as a percentage of gross national product was 100 per cent. Every year since then, year after