

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 16, 1976

The House met at 11 a.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES RESTRAINT ACT

AMENDMENT TO REMOVE CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS RESPECTING
TRAINING ALLOWANCE RATES

The House resumed, from Monday, November 15, consideration of the motion of Mr. Andras that Bill C-19, to amend or repeal certain statutes to enable restraint of government expenditures, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, last evening I commenced my remarks just prior to ten o'clock. I want to impress upon the House that the statements I make reflect my opinion and also, I am sure, the opinion of many hundreds of people across Canada, that this government is nothing more than a leaky vessel which can no longer hold water. In looking back over the statement made in the House of Commons by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), as recorded at page 957 of *Hansard*, I find he stated:

If the government on behalf of the taxpayers in this country wants to cut expenditures, as it does, one of the clearest places to go to work is where expenditures have unfortunate impact and where the spending is unwise or leads to extra cost than is otherwise the case.

The first question I would like to put to the minister is: How can he prove that the government wants to cut expenditures, in light of the recent publicity that was given to his travel expenses? It is almost idiotic, in my opinion, for the minister to say in the House that the government wants to cut expenditures when a minister of the Crown is spending a quarter of a million dollars a year in taxpayers' money. This has to stop. We just cannot afford it. The taxpayers of Canada cannot stand that. Further on he says that where expenditures should first be cut is where they have an unfortunate impact. This is exactly what the government is doing; it is cutting expenditures where they are having an unfortunate impact.

Take, for instance, the withdrawal of the subsidization of the flour milling industry in eastern Canada. I want to impress upon hon. members the fact that not only eastern Canada is suffering as a result of this policy of the government, but also the millers in western Canada. I have been informed that millers in western Canada will suffer more than millers in eastern Canada. I think the government should explain to this House just where this burden will fall.

When the minister found out he was in trouble on the issue, he said the government would institute a new program which would cost \$9 million. I have seen some of these programs which the government said would cost so much. Let us consider AIB which employed 200 people to administer its program at first. Now the personnel number around 1,000, five times the original number, within the first year. When the minister says in the House that the new program will cost \$9 million, I just do not believe him, neither do a great many Canadians. The minister went on to say, "... and where the spending is unwise or leads to extra cost than is otherwise the case."

● (1110)

What could be more unwise than an hon. member spending money to travel back and forth to his constituency by private jet when there is accommodation provided by common carriers? We have Air Canada and CP Air. There are two means of travel open to the minister, and there is travel accommodation to the city of Saskatoon. The statements of the minister do not hold water, and I am sure the people across Canada recognize that. The minister went on to say the following:

That really means it is not just a matter of who pays—between the taxpayer and the person who is asking for the service or using it—but whether the lowest possible amount is in fact incurred.

If that is not a joke, I have never heard one. When the minister can spend \$7,000 on a trip from here to Saskatoon, when he could take a common carrier for less than \$300, how in the world can he say that he is using the least expensive means and that the lowest possible amount is incurred? That is nothing short of a joke. That is why I say that the government is becoming nothing more than a leaky vessel.

The government is pouring cold water on incentives to work. People are losing faith. There is distrust in Canada. We are suffering a rate of inflation which is not acceptable, and it has put us beyond the cost factor in other countries in production and living. We cannot survive under that and we have to realize that the policies of governments have a great deal to do with the problems we are undergoing at the present time. The taxation policies of governments are very important. That is why we are debating this bill at such length. There are many ways in which the government could move in order to implement policies and means of taxation which would be beneficial to the people and not necessarily an increasing load for them.

In my remarks yesterday I stated that in 1969 the accumulated taxation by all levels of government totalled \$24 billion. Five years later, in 1974, the accumulated total was \$48 billion. The people of Canada cannot stand this kind of taxation without getting some return. When I say that the government is pouring cold water on incentives, this is exactly