

mean that that is what all trainees receive, but it does show what the minimum allowance is for a single adult in occupational training.

We are not told what the alternative is to the elimination of this clause. The wording in Bill C-19 dealing with this simply says that the Minister of Manpower and Immigration will set the allowance levels, and that these rates will relate to the family circumstances and living costs of the adult in training. This section lends itself to a broad range of interpretations, and these interpretations can be related not only to the circumstances of the adults but also to their allegiance to the Liberal party and to their geographical location or province.

A regulation that lends itself to so many interpretations also lends itself to widespread abuse, and we have found that that is all too often true where this government is concerned. I do not want to give any such options or latitude to any member of this government, or to any official appointed by this government. The latest Auditor General's report is full of examples of wasteful and even illegal expenditures of public money by members of this government and by senior officials in the public service. I do not want to make it easier for them to repeat these acts, I want to make it tougher on them. I want to make it as nearly impossible as we can make it, and yet we have before us the provision in Bill C-19 to allow the Minister of Manpower and Immigration to disburse public funds at his or her own discretion. This loophole must be plugged, not after this bill is passed but before it is passed.

Over and over again, as in the case of the anti-inflation legislation, to cite only one of dozens, we were told to approve the legislation and the government would fill in the blanks afterwards. I think that it would be a good thing to start right now and have the blanks filled in by the government before the legislation is passed by the House. Perhaps we can have this done at the committee stage when there is time for the government to work out the details that are lacking in the legislation, such as in this bill which we are presently debating. If the government minister involved with a bill cannot, for any reason, fill in the blanks, then the bill should be set aside until it can be done. Surely a minister knows what he or she plans to do in a particular situation, such as setting levels of training allowances as proposed in Bill C-19. The government should let us know what those allowances should be, and then ask us to pass them.

● (2140)

As a member of the Public Accounts Committee for nearly four years I have more than a passing interest in the Auditor General's report, which came out yesterday. I suppose it is the subject of conversation in the homes of nearly all Canadians because they now see the way the government has been spending money, and more important, the way it has been wasting money. The damaging and almost damning statement made by the Auditor General has been quoted and will probably be quoted for weeks and months, if not years, and that statement is that parliament and, indeed, the government have lost or are close to losing effective control of the public

purse. That is something which causes us all a great deal of worry and concern.

In many meetings of the Public Accounts Committee we have heard witnesses, various government ministers and their deputy ministers. Time and again we have heard the Auditor General tell us about various infractions of the rules of good accounting and good financing, and he has told us that the government has acted illegally. He was not talking about hundreds or thousands of dollars but millions of dollars. He recited only a few infractions because with his present staff the Auditor General cannot do more than just scratch the surface. A great many of us on this side of the House, and probably a good many government members, would be staggered if we were informed of every infraction.

I have been considerably interested in office accommodation and the alarming amount spent on that. Much of the space which has been purchased has not even been used. As hon. members are aware, the deputy minister of public works is the greatest landlord in Canada.

**Mr. Huntington:** He is a big spender too.

**Mr. Darling:** That is quite right. He was before the committee, and when we learned the amounts of money which were being spent on office space, we were amazed. I feel that employees are entitled to very fine office accommodation, but I think of private office buildings and of the small office building in my own town where I did my business when I see some of these grand mandarin palaces which are under construction at a time of restraint. All we have to do is look across the river to Hull and see \$1 billion climbing up to the sky. The great majority of that space, if not all of it, is to be government space, whether purchased or leased.

The public service occupies approximately 39 million square feet of office space, and that costs \$249 million. It has been proved that there has been inefficient use of space and overly generous accommodation. I suggested that this was the case last year, but we did not have time to consider it because my suggestion came just before parliament rose. I am hoping that this year the Public Accounts Committee will make a point of inspecting some of this office space. We know that as yet a great deal of it is vacant and that a great deal of it is the plushiest accommodation in the world, and to me that is a wanton waste of money. I feel that there should be a more realistic formula for calculating office space requirements. The Department of Public Works is currently developing guidelines, and this time I hope it will be a little more strict.

Last year certain expenditures were approved, and they were exceeded by more than 30 per cent. I am wondering how this came to pass. As I say, I am well aware that many government agencies have grown like Topsy. The Anti-Inflation Board came into being about a year ago, and it was projected that it would need a staff of, I think, 300. I understand that the number of staff now is 1,200.

**Mr. McKenzie:** They are going to build a skyscraper in Hull for them now.