

parliament wields over the purse strings of the nation will continue to diminish.

Those words not only told what was happening at the time they were spoken but provided a prophetic look into the future. Already that future has become all too visible as the control parliament wields over the purse strings of Canada goes ever downwards. If ever there was a time when parliament should take the bull by the horns and pass legislation to strengthen the office of the Auditor General, that time is now.

The problem seems to be that the government regards the Auditor General as it regards parliament itself, nothing more than a nuisance. When Maxwell Henderson wrote the following words about the then president of the treasury board, who is now the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Drury), he might just as well have been writing about the entire cabinet. This is what he said:

Drury, by his own admission to me, never understood the function of the Auditor General; he could never comprehend why we reported all those non-productive expenditures in our reports and I had to explain to him that it was done by order of parliament.

The fact that the functions of the Auditor General had to be explained to a minister is bad enough, but it is even worse that the government should object to parliament being made aware of so-called non-productive expenditures. I recall one non-productive expenditure in my own constituency of Leeds where the government had moved in a water testing laboratory to the city of Brockville just prior to an election campaign. It moved it in with much suitable fanfare for local consumption, and supposedly Brockville had received a permanent establishment from the Department of Health and Welfare. Then when the election was over, the government moved the establishment out to another centre, but it remained stuck with the lease and continued to pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars rent for vacant space in a shopping centre until the lease expired some years later.

I would like to return just for a moment to the growth in the Privy Council office and in the Prime Minister's office, which provides an excellent example of the increasing power of the executive branch of government. What on earth do all these people do? On May 22 the Prime Minister tried to pass it off by saying that about half his staff existed to answer his mail, but a look beneath the surface clearly shows some of the things which have happened since 1968, and probably the most obvious indication of the increase in power of the executive branch appeared in the establishment shortly after the Prime Minister took office of regional desks in his office. No longer were the elected representatives to be the ones who reflected the opinions and views of the Canadian people. Instead, an addition was made to the bureaucracy, and further additions have been going on ever since.

Even these additions are not sufficient to satisfy the obvious lust for power on the part of the Prime Minister and some of his associates. They have found it necessary to engage all sorts of outside consultants, brought in for large fees, to perform services which could undoubtedly be performed by those already in senior positions in the public service. Among the vast personnel in the Prime Minister's office is a horde of administrative assistants, executive assistants, special assistants, and so on. I would like to refer briefly to one of these individuals, the princi-

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pal secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. Jack Austin. In particular I would like to refer to a recent Southam News story which stated in effect that he was using the facilities of the Prime Minister's office as an information gathering centre to fight a \$70,000 personal tax case against the government.

This is a pretty serious allegation, and it is certainly serious enough that it should have been dealt with immediately by the Prime Minister. If the news story is not according to fact, this should have been stated publicly at once. However, a strange silence on the subject is the only thing coming from the government, and it seems to be yet another example indicating that the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council office are some kind of inner sanctums beyond parliament, beyond criticism by the press, and beyond any accountability whatsoever to anyone.

I realize that I have only several minutes left, so I would like to conclude by saying that there are many unanswered questions. I think the *Globe and Mail* in an editorial a few days ago put it well when it said, in regard to the appearance of the Prime Minister before this House recently, the following:

But what Mr. Trudeau forgets is that there are a great many Canadians who feel entitled to answers to the questions he dodged: why has the cost of running the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council office increased 40 times over . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has now expired.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Joyal (Maisonneuve-Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the motion submitted today by the members of the official opposition refers to a bill with a view to increasing and reinforcing the office of the Auditor General of Canada.

I am all the more satisfied, considering that the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) is here and that, as member of the opposition, he is presiding over the work of such a committee. Being myself vice-chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and having had occasion since the beginning of Parliament to participate actively in the committee's tasks, one will readily understand, Mr. Speaker, that the motion submitted by the opposition today is not a matter of indifference to me. Indeed, since the publication of the Wilson report on March 27, 1975, I feel that there is not a single member in this House that is indifferent to the office and future of the Auditor General. But before mentioning anything directly about this report, Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out the impartiality, neutrality and honesty with which the hon. member for South Shore is presiding over the destiny of the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, ever since I have been attending the discussions of this committee, all members of Parliament who are on the committee, including members of the opposition, have noticed by themselves to what extent the hon. member has mastered the work of the committee and to what extent he is concerned about ensuring its effectiveness.