

and I speak as a social democrat. We live in a society in which the public sector is necessarily becoming more and more important. It behooves us to make public enterprise, as represented by the departments and agencies of government, work in a businesslike manner.

While we, on the Public Accounts Committee, examine the Auditor General's report, interview representatives of departments he criticizes, and do our best to rectify or at least recommend reforms to reduce non-productive expenditures, we are but dealing with the tip of the iceberg. That iceberg at the federal level has now reached proportions of almost \$20 billion in spending per year. It is one thing to demand, as does the motion of the official opposition, action to restore control of public funds to Parliament. We support that, Mr. Speaker, but, even with improved accounting by Treasury Board to parliament and even with an improved system of examination of estimates, there is more to it than that. We need to deal with the continuing cause and not just with the annual result of waste in public spending.

The Auditor General in his report points out that it is more than ten years since there was a management study of government organization, its administration, and methods and procedures by a qualified team, for the benefit of parliament and taxpayers. He specifically asked the House to consider this. In the House yesterday, on behalf of the New Democratic Party I sought to move the following motion:

That this House urges the government to take immediate steps to supply the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament with expanded resources, including research, legal and other staff necessary to conduct a thoroughgoing, in-depth and in-breadth examination of our immense and complex expenditures to enable the most effective and economical use of such outlays in the public interest.

That motion was not accepted yesterday. I commend the proposition which it contains to the attention of the government and to all other hon. members. If we are to get proper parliamentary control over government spending and not merely over the examination of accounts, essential as that is, we need to know the roots of waste as well as the branches.

Mr. Baldwin: A new government would help.

Mr. Mather: Provincial governments as well as the federal government, for the most part, are spending more and more. They are responsible for more and are taking over more and more from the private sector. To my mind, this is inevitable and good. We are passing from a once essential but now outmoded social order. Science has pushed us on to deal collectively, through government, with common problems.

As I deplore the waste of private enterprise, as evidenced by the 230 different labels or companies producing and duplicating, at consumer cost, essentially the same products, by the blocks of duplicating supermarkets and by the expensive advertising of these things, I deplore all the kinds of waste that have developed, including the waste in public enterprise. We, of the New Democratic Party, consider the motion before us today as an important and timely one. We seek reforms in this important area. We are glad to see that the Auditor General referred favourably to draft legislation involving a new auditor

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general's act. He recommends it. The objectives of the Public Accounts Committee, in so far as it was involved in producing this new draft legislation, was to combine to the fullest degree possible independence for the Auditor General in his war on waste, and security for the members of his staff. We hope that a new auditor general's act will provide for both these essential points.

As I have already noted, Mr. Speaker, we are calling for an expanded and greatly strengthened public accounts committee. If we are to do our jobs properly as members of that committee and save the public's time, our time, and public money, we must have researchers, legal help, permanent secretaries, and so on. In addition, I would urge that the committee be enabled to meet even during recesses, in order to get on with the job of dealing with how the public's money is being spent. To my way of thinking the average Canadian thinks few things are more important than knowing how the money that he or she has contributed through taxes is being spent. Taxpayers want to know if that money is being spent properly. If there is doubt in the public mind as to the efficiency and effectiveness of money spent on public business then, surely, that would undermine public confidence in Parliament. So, from every point of view, financial, social and democratic, I think the Public Accounts Committee, the instrument available to us in Parliament, ought to be strengthened, expanded and given more power. So far as the official opposition motion coincides with the criticisms which we have levelled with the proposals we have put forward, we support it.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, the motion presented before the House today challenges the post of the Auditor General of Canada with the powers required for the carrying out of his function of an honest and impartial supervisor of government administration.

Indeed, in December 1972 the same mover appealed to the Auditor General, Mr. Henderson, to proceed to a scrutiny of the Unemployment Insurance Commission's books, and here is what could be read in the Quebec newspaper, *Le Soleil*:

Mr. Baldwin stipulated that a report of Auditor General Maxwell Henderson should be brought forward before Parliament immediately upon resumption of its sittings in January.

"Government comments on the colossal amounts handled by the Unemployment Insurance Commission were not successful in inspiring credibility", Mr. Baldwin stated in a press release.

"From the start, a mixture of deceit and ignorance was apparent, and the true facts are still unrevealed even today. It is time to call for the intervention of the watch-dog and to be apprised of the results of an autonomous and thorough examination of the books", he added.

The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) was well aware of the fact that the Auditor General's report would be tabled on March 31, 1973.

After reading the report and noting the most serious discrepancies denounced by Mr. Henderson, we are astounded to see that the Auditor General presents this report each year, without succeeding in changing the administration by one jot.