

Financial Administration Act

Board and that the details of this change will be announced after the appointment of the comptroller general.

Mr. Speaker, the idea is good in itself but we shall make sure that we are not going to create another administrative position that will only add to the burden of bureaucracy. The so-called functional reports will have to be efficient. On that respect I wonder what the term "functional" means.

The financial control of various departments is a heavy responsibility and all senior civil servants will have to co-operate if that office is to serve its purpose. Lastly we may wonder if the responsibilities of that position are not going to overlap those of the financial administration branch of the Treasury Board. If it is the case, why a new office?

However, I hope that Bill C-10 will eliminate the abuses made by various departments and of which we are all aware and I think particularly of the Department of National Defence and the excessive commission allegedly paid an individual whose name has not been released. I refer to the Candu reactors sold by the National Energy Board of Canada to South Korea and Chile. In fact this bill is not perfect but it deserves our attention and this is why we give it our support.

[English]

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to share a few thoughts on Bill C-10, to amend the Financial Administration Act. Prior to doing that, I wish to commend the critics in this party in this area, in particular the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). When the Auditor General suggested that we have a position of comptroller general, this party immediately came out in support of that position.

We want to ensure that this appointment is more than just a political puppet for the Liberal administration. That is why our critic, the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre), will propose amendments to the effect that we have terms of reference defined in legislation as to what the responsibility of this gentleman will be.

● (2122)

I wish to underscore the comments made by the hon. member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn) on behalf of the NDP. It is obvious he was aligning himself with the position taken by the hon. member for Calgary Centre. It was clear from the comments made by the hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. Allard) that all the opposition parties are in agreement with regard to this legislation. We feel there is a need for it but that there should be a more precise definition of the responsibilities of the Comptroller General. It is important he should be accountable to parliament and that his report should come before committees of the House. It is important he should be more than simply another deputy minister.

When we review the career of Mr. Harry Rogers, who has been designated for this post, it becomes obvious he is a very competent individual. We would not want to see him restricted in any way. On the basis of past actions of the government it is clear that suitable terms of reference with regard to this new

[Mr. Allard.]

position are needed. We do not want to see any cover-up in the area of financial management, especially in times when expenditures are soaring.

The Auditor General stressed the need for greater accountability. In November, 1976 he tabled an annual report in which he indicated the government for losing control over its spending. He considered the situation so serious that, he said, if it continued he would be unable to approve the accounts of Canada. He found the government had overstated its financial position by more than \$7 billion through a series of unacceptable accounting practices. An inquiry was instituted, and before the week was out one of the members of the four-man commission appointed by the government was forced to resign after a conflict of interest charge.

The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) is an extremely intelligent individual with a good business background. It must break his heart at times to watch the government's financial mismanagement, to see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) bowing to political expediency rather than considering the economic needs of Canada as a whole. Even the budget will be dictated by the campaign managers and by the senior organizer of the Liberal party, Senator Davey, rather than the Minister of Finance.

I hope that when this bill becomes a reality such things as the wasting of \$750,000 by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) on his own flying escapades will be curbed. It is all very well for members opposite to talk about restraint and claim they are good stewards of the public purse, but that is not the case. I intend to put forward many examples of ways in which the government has misused large sums of money provided by the Canadian taxpayers, but before doing so it is appropriate to review some of the so-called major accomplishments of the present administration. Just the other day they voted against a motion by the NDP, with an amendment from our own party, to offer equality of rights to women. I hope they are very proud of what they did. We intend to bring this issue up during the election.

It is obvious, when one reviews the entire four year period during which I have been in this chamber, that the government has wasted a golden opportunity to realign its economic thinking. Unemployment levels are breaking records, we are experiencing record inflation, record mortgage rates, record interest rates and record government spending, all because of the actions and omissions of the present administration. Of the last ten budgets, nine were deficit budgets and this year the deficit will amount to close to \$10 billion.

Mr. Andras: His figures are jumbled up.

Mr. Elzinga: It is obvious we are dealing with a scandal within government. A bit of research I have put together shows 25 specific areas of incompetence, corruption and deceit which have been permitted by people across the aisle. There is the affair of the AECL reactor sale. We are not getting the accountability that people have a right to expect. We recall such things as the Sky Shops affair and the affair of the Statistics Canada employees. All these things bring to mind