

*Government Expenditure*

to me that the responsibility must ultimately remain with the Government as to the amount of its expenditures, deficits and so on.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would like to review some of the steps which the Government has taken in recent years to strengthen accountability and management throughout the Government and its relationship to Parliament in general. I would like to underline at this time that while these measures have been significant indeed, they have respected, they have been consistent with, and they have complemented the existing parliamentary traditions. The focus has consistently been on making these conditions work more effectively, rather than on throwing the traditions themselves into question. This approach is in fundamental conflict with the idea of the Hon. Member for Mississauga South.

In our system, Parliament is responsible for three main tasks; to legislate, to grant supply and to authorize taxes, and, finally, to support or not to support the Government of the day. These tasks are traditionally performed by granting, or refusing, assent to measures proposed by the Government after they have undergone public scrutiny and debate. The responsibility for governing the country is vested, not in Parliament, but in the Ministers of the Crown. Parliament is responsible for the continuous scrutiny of the Government's implementation of the measures to which Parliament has given assent.

There is a view held by some that Parliament should play a greater role in actually framing the measures put to it by the Government. It is this belief which appears to underlie the motion before us and which is the reason why it represents such a radical break with existing parliamentary traditions. Fundamental to the role of Parliament as a body to which the Government must be accountable is the need for Parliament to approve the Government's expenditures and Parliament's powers to review these expenditures. These powers are currently exercised through the Public Accounts Committee and through several standing committees of the House studying Estimates. Significant improvements in how the Government reports to these various committees have been implemented in recent years. I will be reviewing some of these a bit later in my remarks in order to illustrate how accountability has already been significantly strengthened.

Several noteworthy proposals to alter the existing committee structure and powers have been put forward in recent years. The Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability, the Lambert Commission, made a number of recommendations in this regard. Members of Parliament, such as the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington) and the Hon. Member for Rosemont (Mr. Lachance), placed a set of proposals before the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedures in November of 1982. This set of proposals would see the creation of four new standing committees with expanded powers. In particular, these committees would be empowered to become involved in the actual formulation of expenditure proposals and counter-proposals rather than being restricted to the scrutiny of measures put forward by the Government. Parliament would itself become directly involved

in the financial operations of the Government under these proposals. Indeed, the Huntington-Lachance report itself concluded that if its recommendations were accepted, it is obvious that these committees would become the foundation of the financial operation of the Government of Canada.

I would point out that implicit in these proposals is the creation of an extensive parliamentary bureaucracy which would require substantial resources for its operations in order to support the work resulting from the expanded committee mandates, a bureaucracy which would parallel that already in existence to support the Government in the formulation of its own spending proposals.

These measures proposed in the motion before us are obviously very similar and close in spirit to those of the two Members.

The Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedures itself based its seventh report largely on its consideration of the Huntington-Lachance proposals. Interestingly enough, however, Mr. Speaker, the committee's recommendations, while accepting the establishment of new standing committees, backs off substantially from empowering these committees to become directly involved in the operations of government. Indeed, the committee report states emphatically that, "It is important to stress that this committee is seeking for Parliament an increased influence in the analysis of Government policies, not direct control of the Government. The committee fully accepts that the executive must be free to make its judgments and to govern, subject, of course, to maintaining the confidence of the House of Commons".

This clearly illustrates that there are different roads to parliamentary reform and that indeed strong differences of opinion now exist among parliamentarians on the subject. The motion before us is clearly premature and is being put forward without an adequate context within which its pros and cons can be weighed.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to elaborate on some of the background necessary for a fuller consideration of these issues by reviewing some of the measures implemented by the Government in recent years to strengthen accountability and management generally, particularly in its relations to Parliament.

In 1975, the Government made manifest its intent to improve the management and control of its expenditures and of Government more broadly by establishing the Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability, the Lambert Commission. The terms of reference of the Commission as set out by the Government clearly reflect its concerns. These terms referred to unprecedented demands placed on government by the growth requested by the public in its responsibilities and programs, a desire to ensure efficiency and probity in the Public Service of Canada, a serious concern about the adequacy of financial administration in government for establishing effective control over, and accountability for, public funds, and the need to use resources effectively, avoid waste and increase productivity in government.