

● (1720)

Why should not this House provide some input to legislation which we want to see passed? There ought to be legislation on the crucial issue involving the survey and state of the public accounts of Canada. Why should not a committee of the House have that report referred to it, with instructions to make a careful study of it and, if necessary, draft a model bill? The government is not bound to accept it. I realize that the government is the master of its own destiny and can do what it wants.

I remember not many years ago, when the government of the day had to deal with the difficult and sensitive subject of divorce, that a parliamentary committee was given wide terms of reference and studied that question for 1½ years. It brought in useful recommendations and annexed to its report a model bill which formed the basis of the bill introduced later by the minister of justice of the day who became the present Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, when acting as minister of justice, showed his conservatism. I spell that with a small "c" because I do not want my social standing to be impaired. Nevertheless, he introduced the bill. It was not as far reaching as it ought to have been. I cite this as an example to show what can be done usefully by a committee of this House in dealing with problems of the kind I have mentioned.

It is grossly wrong of the government House leader—this is part of my complaint—to refuse to discuss with myself, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the House leader of the Cr ditiste party terms of reference under which this matter could be considered by a parliamentary committee or by a committee of this House, as the case may be. The government, if it were to bring in legislation, would have the benefit of that review if there were such committee consideration. I think it is very wrong indeed of the government to refuse us the right to provide some input into those recommendations which the government will take into consideration when it decides to deal with that legislation.

It will not have escaped your notice, sir, that no vote is attached to this motion. If there were a vote, it would of course be defeated. The government whip would whistle up his honourable bodies and there would be no chance for our motion to pass. I think it is a waste of time calling some of these votes. I suggest, through you, Mr. Speaker, to members on the government side and to the people of Canada that the grave crisis and predicament which we find ourselves in at this time with regard to the public accounts of this country, with regard to the indications of gross mismanagement, over-expenditure, waste, extravagance and the government's dictatorial and tyrannical conduct call for the most careful consideration. Time is running against us and I should like to think that some consideration will be given to the proposition I have put before the House.

Hon. Jean Chr tien (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the opposition has given me the opportunity to keep in shape.

Mr. Stanfield: Penalty killing.

Mr. Chr tien: I am really amazed by the hon. member's motion. It is almost unbelievable. When I was practising

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as a country lawyer I never saw people pleading guilty in this manner. This is unbelievable. Hon. members opposite cannot do their job as an opposition criticizing the government, and now they want someone else to do their job. They want the Auditor General to do it. We have given the opposition 500 hours in committees to examine government expenditures. All they can do is come forward with a motion which reads:

That it is the opinion of this House that it is necessary to declare that the power of the executive has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished—

The hon. member who spoke on the motion did not substantiate his case. I do not know what he means. I presume he spoke to take up time in the House. The motion continues:

—and, in particular, that means must be found by this House to inquire into, prevent, and correct abuses in the expenditure of public money by the government of Canada, including the immediate passage of laws to strengthen and improve the office of the Auditor General.

Mr. Alexander: A very good motion.

Mr. Chr tien: Well, it is a motion, exactly what I was expecting. We are living in the twentieth century, not in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries where the Conservative Party is. This motion takes us back 200 or 300 years. It could have been moved in England in 1780. You know, I was not very old then. I thought the opposition would come to grips with the difficulties modern governments must deal with in the twentieth century; instead, they move the sort of motion which belongs to 1780 and talk about Sir John A. Macdonald, and so on. They have not dealt with the realities of modern government. This is amazing. Yes, a report was prepared.

Mr. Baldwin: And you hid it.

Mr. Chr tien: Yes, we got it.

An hon. Member: And it was tabled in the House.

Mr. Chr tien: And it was tabled in the House.

Mr. Baldwin: You hid the bill.

Mr. Chr tien: We will have the bill. It is going to come. We received a report a couple of weeks ago, and the opposition wants us to table the bill today. We cannot do it. They want us to follow a procedure which will take months and months, and perhaps years. We cannot wait that long before coming to grips with the problem. We tabled the report and we have started to work. This government has started to act. We do not talk, as the opposition likes to do; we are willing to move and we have said in the House that we are preparing legislation.

Mr. Baldwin: You have not said that.

Mr. Chr tien: The hon. member uses strong words. I do not use them because I do not try to impress anyone. He talked about the committee preparing a bill and about wanting the Auditor General to be respected. We have great respect for the Auditor General. This bill was put aside at the request of the new Auditor General because he wanted time to look into the situation. He wanted to know what the situation was.