

The hon. member for Calgary Centre questioned the adequacy of the government's implementation of management and administrative procedures which will ensure that taxpayers' funds are spent efficiently, effectively and according to the will of parliament. Only a few weeks ago in the House I participated in a debate wherein, due to the fact that teaching facilities at universities for doctors, nurses and dental assistants were sufficient and that there were more rooms and class facilities than were being utilized presently, the Government of Canada decided to cut that program off. Obviously it was no longer needed. The classrooms which were built and the facilities which were put up were not being utilized fully at the present time. In the same debate I listened to the official opposition say that the Government of Canada should spend that money anyway since it is committed to the provinces, and that regardless of spending another \$12 million, \$15 million or \$20 million, we should create additional classrooms even though the present ones were not being fully utilized.

I bring this matter up because it is very hard for some members on this side of the house to hear that we are being financially irresponsible, yet on almost every occasion when we say that funds can be cut from this or that area and we provide a rationale for it, usually we are criticized in ringing terms for not caring for the people of Canada. There are certain ways it can be done. For five years I have listened and the most criticism we have received is that various departments are not funded enough. Hon. members on this side will realize that day in and day out we are castigated because we do not provide money for worthy projects. One can say that on one hand, and then say on the other hand that the government should be more financially responsible, should not increase its deficit or its budgets. But one cannot have it both ways.

**Mr. Paproski:** When did you start becoming responsible?

**Mr. Anderson:** One cannot have it both ways. One must be financially responsible and say no, especially when considering the stupid argument regarding whether further classrooms should be built for dentists, doctors and nurses. It was the most ridiculous argument I have ever heard, that since we committed the money, whether it was needed or not, we should continue to spend it. That is what the official opposition does: they want it both ways, and they cannot have it both ways.

With respect to taxpayers' funds being spent officially, it must be obvious to all members that parliament has made many provisions by which the Government of Canada accounts to parliament for the funds which it has appropriated. The principal piece of legislation is the Financial Administration Act and the related regulations promulgated thereunder. Parliament is provided with many opportunities to review the government's financial operations, contrary to what has been said by some members today, both prospectively and retroactively. For instance, these opportunities are: the estimates tabled by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Buchanan); the budget introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien); the statements of financial operations published monthly by the government in the *Canada Gazette*; and the

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public accounts of Canada prepared by the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. De Bané) and tabled in parliament by the Minister of Finance. The estimates and the public accounts of Canada are reviewed in depth by committees of the House of Commons, and the budget of the Minister of Finance is debated in the House. Also there is the annual report of the Auditor General which is tabled in the House. This provides members with the opportunity, if they wish to partake of it, to review an independent opinion of the financial operations of the government.

It is no secret that we in this House are dealing with the main estimates in each of the standing committees at the present time. Hon. members have alleged that they are not given an opportunity of looking into departmental spending, yet last Thursday the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development met and we sat for 35 minutes waiting for a member of the opposition to show up and look at the main estimates of the department. Obviously members are busy, but we hear the same complaint month in and month out, year in and year out, that members do not have an opportunity to look into the estimates and spending of departments.

If people in Canada attended a standing committee meeting, they would wonder what we are doing. It is obvious to many members on both sides of the House that the time we have to look at the main estimates is not utilized very well. Often we wait 15, 20 or 25 minutes for a quorum to start proceedings. In many instances members do not discuss the main estimates but matters which pertain to their ridings. They use this procedure as a means of asking questions of departmental officials, as well as the minister of the particular department concerned. I do not disagree with the right of members to do so, but if they are before the committee to look at the main estimates and to question government spending, then I am sorry I have to say that the time is not being utilized well.

Also it is fair to say that the annual report of the Auditor General gives members of the House the opportunity to review an independent opinion of the financial operations of government, especially as it relates to the use of spending authorities according to the will of parliament. The forum for this review is the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I should like to refer to one matter which has caused me some concern; it has been discussed by members on both sides of the House. We now have an Auditor General who is totally independent, we have a Comptroller General and we have people who look very closely at the spending of government. I wonder if hon. members in the opposition have considered that it is all very well to look at the actual spending and the fiscal accounting operation of departments and their budgets but have concluded that there is an overstepping into the actual decision making about money to be spent by particular departments. From my own point of view, I have some fear that the more controls and the more watchdogs you have in respect of government spending, the more in fact you are questioning the decisions of the government to spend.