

Financial Administration

to the same extent. Therefore the inequalities become greater and greater; and therefore the irony of being told that there is too much money is, to the large percentage of the population, a bitter one.

Without enlarging further on that at the moment, I just come back and say that this matter is of great importance. I hope the committee will treat it so; and in particular I hope the committee, the public—so far as one's words can reach them—and those particularly who concern themselves in these matters, will searchingly ask whether the time has not now come when we are going to approach as nearly as possible to the situation which the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) has often told us we are not in, namely that of having a business-like balance sheet. We may as well face the fact.

It has been pointed out to us that this act has been on the statute books for a long time. The one that we pass today is likely to stay on the statute books for a long time. For that reason among others I hope that the committee will do a serious job. Incidentally I hope that there will not be any rush. I hope that the committee will not be cut off with sort of short notice before its work can be done. Even if this work had to go over to the next session, it seems to me that it is a matter of sufficient importance to warrant it.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the debate on this measure is not likely to be put into book form and be published as a thrilling best seller. But as the previous speaker has indicated, the measure deals with an important subject. As has been pointed out on previous occasions, it deals with the whole question of the control of governmental finances, and it deals with the question of parliamentary control over the government so far as its financial operations are concerned. When one realizes the scope of the bill, going into that field as it does, he cannot but recognize that it is an exceedingly important measure.

I submit that it has always been a matter of great importance to any democratic country that the finances of the government should be on a proper basis and under strict parliamentary control. I submit further that the need for complete parliamentary control and the need for confidence on the part of the people that financial matters are being handled properly will increase as time goes on. One of the reasons that I believe that need will increase is that, as I see it, the part that governments will play in the financial and economic affairs of our country will continue to increase with the passing of the years.

There are those in this house who want that to come. Some of us feel that it is a part of the democratic process; that the whole of our financial and economic life is something over which the people should have more and more control in the name of democracy. There are others in this house who do not particularly desire that we move in that direction, but even they admit that we are doing so and the likelihood is that federal budgets will be larger in the years that lie ahead than they are now, and as we contemplate that fact it does make it imperative that we plan our financial administration on the best possible basis.

As a government we are getting more and more into economic fields. We are getting into various branches of production; we are extending our part in the field of social security and we are being called upon as a federal government to concern ourselves with the economic and financial needs of our people in many ways. In fact, if I may say so in passing, despite the off-the-cuff answer that the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) gave me on the orders of the day this afternoon, I submit that the day will come when the federal government will have to pay more attention to the needs of education generally throughout the country. There is no question but that that could be done without infringing upon the provincial jurisdiction over education, and I submit that the day of federal financial aid to education will come, for come it must.

With such thoughts in mind I emphasize the need for the best possible control over governmental finances. That means that there must be ways and means of achieving economy in a huge set-up such as this. It also means that our statutory provisions for appropriating and expending money, as well as accounting for it, must be very complete. The government of Canada has had many years of experience in this field, and it has had the advice of able men in the Department of Finance and the Auditor General. Thus it is no surprise that there has been placed before parliament at this time a bill that does seem to be an improvement on the legislation that we have had in the past. I welcome the bill, and I am glad too that it is going to be presented to a committee, the committee on public accounts, to deal with. I support the suggestion just made by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Macdonnell) that that committee should not be rushed. Frankly, I do not know when it is going to get time and where it is going to get the necessary staff to do any of this work at this session, in view of the large number of committees now