

*Company of Young Canadians Act*

the council to sit again and reconsider its decision. There must be a confrontation, because if the council happens to be irresponsible, which seems to be the case at present, they will not listen to the comptroller.

**Mr. Otto:** And then what happens?

**Mr. Lewis:** What happens under the present bill? Under the present bill the council says, "We want the Wards Island project to continue". The comptroller then says, "You cannot make any payments".

**Mr. Otto:** And the contract cannot be entered into; the comptroller decides that.

**Mr. Lewis:** I was given a specific example and I am dealing with it. In this case the contract is already made. I said in answer to the minister that in my amendment the situation is no different, no better and no worse than it is in the present bill. The comptroller would be in exactly the same position. The council would say, "The Wards Island project is to continue" and the comptroller would say, "I will not sign the cheque". Those are exceptional situations, and such confrontations will have to take place—they will clear up the situation. I hope that very soon the Secretary of State will bring forth legislation which will change the structure of the company. But even then he will have to have some kind of accountability, and the accountability which I suggest, in my humble view, unless I am very much mistaken, is a great deal better than what is suggested in the bill, from the point of view of the principle of the company.

● (4:50 p.m.)

Even without this extension of time, Mr. Chairman, I was going to take 30 seconds to draw the committee's attention to the fact that we have no intention of interfering with subclause 3, which also contains a very considerable power whereby the comptroller may demand and obtain all documents, books, accounts, etc. That, together with his authority to refuse to sign cheques if he thinks the money is going to be abused, gives him all the power that is needed for financial accountability without direct interference with the program, although he will have indirect power to interfere with the program. I just do not know how to devise a comptroller who does not have an indirect control over the program.

The president of the Treasury Board is not a dictator. As everybody knows, he is a good-natured, genial, generous man, but there is no

[Mr. Lewis.]

doubt that he affects the programs of every department of government by saying, "This is the limit of the expenditures you will be allowed to make." There is no way you can have power over finances without having indirect control of a program.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a brief, simple question for my edification? Is it his intention, by this amendment, to provide that the comptroller would not have the power to interfere with or prevent the programs of the Company of Young Canadians continuing to the extent that was determined by the council and the executive director?

**Mr. Lewis:** No. You have two different approaches. Mr. Chairman, I really feel badly about taking up all this time of the committee. I suppose that since we are in committee I can speak more than once, although I do feel uneasy about it. As I say, you have two different approaches. First, there is the approach in the bill. Every time the council wants to make a contract with a volunteer or with anybody else in relation to a project, and every time the council and the executive director decide on a project, they have to go to the comptroller and say, "We have this project. We want to enter into this contract. Would you please approve it?" That is what the bill now means, so that at every step the comptroller must O.K. in advance every decision made by the council and the executive director; otherwise, the decision is completely frustrated.

The approach I suggest is that the council and the executive director have the initial and continuing responsibility of deciding on the projects, of entering into contracts, of choosing the volunteers—I hope much more responsibly than in the past. Once that is done and the contract is signed, then and only then, I imagine, can the comptroller, when the time comes for signing the cheque and in his view it is for something that is against the public interest or is a misuse of funds—somebody is using the money to finance somebody's living, as was suggested in the case we dealt with—use his power and refuse to sign the cheque. It is a reversal of the process. Instead of making the comptroller responsible and more important than the council and the executive director, it is the other way about.

This procedure is comparable with that of a board of directors of a corporation which decides on a certain policy. I have read cases on this in the law books, although I have