

The Address

● (1715)

To remedy this weakness in the government's legislative program, I ask this House to consider restricting its spending in the fiscal year 1994-95 to less than \$153 billion by adding a simple spending cap to the government's legislative program.

Members familiar with the government's financial statements will know that the federal government is currently projected to spend \$162 billion in 1994-95. The spending cap we propose represents a 6 per cent reduction in that amount. How such a reduction should be made can be the subject of the budget debate and speech. The point of adding the spending cap to the government's legislative program now is to send a signal to investors and taxpayers that in the very first days of this session members on both sides of the House are deadly serious about reducing federal spending.

The subamendment I will propose is an expression of non-confidence in the spending patterns established by the previous government. Is there any member of this House, with perhaps one or two exceptions, who could not vote for that? This amendment or subamendment is not an expression of non-confidence in the government's legislative program. It is a simple improvement which says: Whatever legislative program this House adopts we must not spend more than \$153 billion on its implementation in 1994-95. I invite all members of the House including government members to support this spending cap.

In conclusion, yesterday members honoured an ancient parliamentary tradition by following you, Mr. Speaker, to the other place and by listening to the speech from the throne and by claiming all the ancient rights of the Commons in the name of the people. The most important of these ancient rights, indeed the first function of the early British Parliaments, and the first function was not a legislative function, the only function of the original Parliaments was to constrain the spending of the crown.

I implore the members of this House to reassert this right of the Commons, not simply in symbolism or in words but by legislative action, by crowning the speech from the throne with a spending cap.

I move:

That the amendment of the leader of the opposition be amended by adding immediately after the words "federal administration" the following words:

particularly the need to restore public confidence in the ability of this House to control the federal deficit and overspending and to limit the government's spending in the fiscal year 1994-95 to less than \$153 billion.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me first of all congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House of Commons. Certainly, your experience in Parliament and your qualities of heart and mind contributed to your being chosen by your peers. I am sure that you will assume your responsibilities with great skill and competence and you can certainly count on my support in the performance of your duties.

I would also like to take the opportunity, as is the custom, to congratulate the movers of the motion in reply to the Speech from the Throne. In their own way, they each reflect what Canada is. With their respective knowledge and abilities, they are both a credit to their constituents and have begun a career in the Parliament of Canada in fine style, and I wish to commend them both.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, who is not only a friend and a classmate but also a fellow parliamentarian, who in this last federal election had a very important personal success at the polls. Without a doubt, he won part of Quebec opinion over to his party, the Bloc Québécois, and at any rate his personal success exceeds what we would have wanted to see in Quebec.

In his new responsibilities as a member of the Parliament of Canada, I wish him the wisdom not only to meet his responsibilities to those who sent him here, but also to discharge the role that he must assume as Leader of the Opposition, which goes far beyond his own aspirations and what he would like to do here in the Canadian Parliament. I do not know how he can reconcile this twofold mandate, but I still wish him much success in this task.

I would also like to congratulate the leader of the Reform Party.

[*English*]

I think it is remarkable to see, at the occasion of the federal election, a party which began as a regional party reflecting the legitimate aspirations of the people of a region more or less becoming a national party. I would like to say to its leader at the very beginning of this new Parliament that we used to have representation by three national parties here in the House of Commons that respected the fabric of our institution and of our country, that fought vigorously from time to time for their respective interests but always understood and fought for a bilingual Canada.

I was very pleased to hear the Reform Party leader speaking in French in his first speech in the House of Commons. I think his