

**Mr. Howard Johnston (Okanagan-Kootenay):** Mr. Speaker, it is a sad time to rise in this House with the government on its deathbed and with a slip of paper coming across with a bill which more than anything else is supposed to pass as an earnest plea that there has been a deathbed repentance over there and that from now on things are going to be different. This, Mr. Speaker, after ten years of prodigality and the most profligate government this country has ever seen; ten years of ever increasing debt; ten years of endeavouring to train an entire generation of Canadians, young and old, to believe that public funds are available for everything and anything; ten years of misspending which has been documented by a variety of reports official and unofficial.

The government now has the nerve to bring forward a bill in these last days of the thirtieth parliament. This bill is to appoint an officer called the Comptroller General of Canada. I always think it is the "mp" in the word "comptroller" that is designed to add a measure of sophistication to the title and to suggest there is something unusually powerful about the office. In ordinary English it would be "cont" and it would just be "controller". But, of course, this person keeps count, one gathers, and "comptrols", and does it with force and power.

Yet there is no indication in the bill as to how this is to be done, what is to be covered, how long the individual will occupy the office, only that he will be there at pleasure and that the duties may be assigned—not necessarily will be, but may be assigned—to him. There would be no requirement on the government over there should they receive some hope for transfusion. I am sure the Canadian public is not going to give them some miracle cure at the last minute to change the situation. Should that happen we are led to believe that this might work; but we know that it is window dressing and there is nothing precise here.

Even the prodigal son after his fling was at least repentant. When he reached the bottom and there was nothing left he at least came home and made a genuine offer to go to work. I cannot for one moment believe that in Bill C-10 is a genuine offer from this government that from now on things will be different.

**An hon. Member:** How many times have we heard that?

**Mr. Johnston:** We have heard it far too often. We can look almost anywhere, whether at the report of the Auditor General of Canada, who looks "after the fact" and we see his concern for such items as the spending on bilingualism in education. This accounts for most of the expenditure under the department's bilingualism development program. It consists of payments to the provinces, includes support for a variety of suggestions as to what they are supposed to be doing there, yet there is a weakening of control in the financial management of contributions.

The Auditor General and the deputy minister of the Department of the Secretary of State admitted that there was no way of auditing how these moneys are used. As members of parliament we receive complaints from within the province of Quebec that the money does not get to where it is supposed to

#### *Financial Administration Act*

for the teaching of English. We know the stories from our own provinces that the money does not get to the point of being used for teaching the French language. It disappears and there is no way of checking on it.

The Auditor General refers to the Canada Council. That organization has been thoroughly taken apart in the last few weeks and months in this parliament and elsewhere. There again there is a great need for some control. I would suggest one of the easiest ways to obtain some control would be to make up the selection committees from a group of the general public instead of setting up selection committees that in themselves are teams of artists working with their fellows. There is the kind of set up which the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) describes as incestuous and which certainly produced on the west coast an interesting game. Readers of one of the Vancouver papers were challenged to match up the awards with the judges who were making them. That is the sort of thing that should not happen.

We can look at the Auditor General's report at page 199 concerning inactive loans. Accounts in this category comprise: Loans to China—Export Credits Insurance Act—\$49 million; loans to Greece—\$7 million with a total of \$56 million. Then there is a note which states: that these loans are described in the public accounts as being neither currently revenue-producing nor realizable. In fact, there has been no change in the outstanding balances for over 20 years.

Another different example of lack of control occurred when nothing was done. How many Canadians realize what happened to the urban demonstration program? This was a con game played with the municipalities across this country. The then minister of state for urban affairs has now moved over to the national defence portfolio where the potentiality for expenditure is much greater. In urban affairs he launched an urban demonstration program supposedly funded by \$100 million. Municipalities across this country were challenged to present projects to draw on that fund. It did not exist at all. There were man-hours by the thousands spent, and delegations came to Ottawa. But there was no money there.

One would hope that a comptroller general might also be able to finger that abuse of the federal estimation of expenses as well, so that one would not only have a firmer control of money that was going out, but in future we would not have situations where lower levels of government would be hoaxed into thinking money was available thereby wasting their limited funds applying for something which could never come to fruition.

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We cannot have any faith in this bill. I believe the office is needed. However, we need the amendment because the bill as it is, is too narrow, too limited, too large a device for platform waving during the election campaign that is certain to come within the year. I am sure that candidate after candidate on the government side will hold this bill up and say "We have repented. We have become truly conservative. We are away to the right in the political spectrum from the official opposition