

*Auditor General*

and all the sectors devolved upon them by the constitution.

Madam Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board greatly disappointed me today all through his speech. I usually like to listen to him, for he is serious, but today, I do not know what sort of wind was blowing, I did not appreciate at all his speech.

● (2030)

I wondered: Is it possible that I could have travelled 500 miles to attend such a speaking contest. He said to the opposition members: If you really want us to work, make us serious proposals. But whose duty is it to make proposals, Madam Speaker?

Whose duty is it to bring forward legislation in this House? The minister seemed to forget that the government does have this authority. And the minister went on: We do not have any control because 50 per cent of the estimates are controlled by the House. The minister knows quite well that every budget is submitted by the government to the consideration of the House and, of course, the majority government always approves it by a majority vote.

If the minister lost control, it is certainly not due to the opposition, but perhaps to the excessive number of technocrats to whom he gave, not to say yielded, all his powers. When he says that expenditures have doubled, he should add that the number of those technocrats has also doubled. The minister also said that we have no time to lose, because we must live in the twentieth century.

The time has come to call the government to reason, to convince it that accumulated deficits will never produce real worth for the country. Even if we discuss government expenditures during 500 hours, we will have lost our time if a negative vote from the government and government members destroys the work of Parliament. This is not the time to play politics in expectation of forthcoming elections. This is the time to administer and save public funds.

We received the new Auditor General's report. I did not read it through, but had a quick look at it. I hope it will be taken seriously by the minister and implemented. I hope the report does not raise government's anger as did the one by the former Auditor General who was forced, although under cover, and I stress forced, to leave his post, because probably he was not looked upon favourably by the government. For this reason, I extend to the new auditor the wish not only that he remain in favour with the government, but also that he stand his ground, that he remain independent in his role. Because I believe that a country's Auditor General must not be influenced by government. The Auditor General's office must be permanent, independent and free to act.

Unfortunately this has not been the case in these last years, with very unfortunate disputes centering on the Auditor General. As long as everyone's function is not respected, as a group with responsibility is not guaranteed the freedom to discharge that responsibility, the country will suffer. Everyone is now complaining that government expenditures are too high. That may be true! There certainly are oversights, because we see in the auditor's report eye-opening remarks. There is stated for instance, in paragraph 54, that the auditor recommends adequate control over the defence industry's productivity program.

[Mr. Gauthier (Roberval).]

I do not wish to read all these data. I shall simply refer to the titles, for I do not have too much time and I simply wish to call the ministers' attention. Because he told us in his speech this afternoon that he would introduce the bill in connection with this report.

We are waiting for this famous legislation, but we are also waiting for the recommendations of the board to be included and not to be put aside.

There is another remark at paragraph 55, and I quote:

55. Internship Salaries Improperly Retained by Canadian Forces Medical Officers.

And paragraph 56 reads:

56. Shared Costs under Assistance Contracts not Verified.

These remarks are rather serious, Madam Speaker. I continue the quotation:

In our 1972 Report (paragraphs 105 and 107) two instances were given of the Audit Services Bureau of the Department of Supply and Services being unable to give an opinion as to the costs of contracts providing Crown assistance to Canadian manufacturers.

It is then recommended that in the future, the government submit these contracts to the auditor who will be entitled to inspect them.

Then, paragraph 57 says:

57. Unauthorized subsidizing of Non-Government Laboratory.

"Unauthorized subsidizing".

If in studying the law, we notice weaknesses in our own constituency concerning unauthorized contracts, and if the auditor and his office have the time to study each item seriously, they will find that action was often taken without the knowledge of the department. It would be appropriate to call the attention of the minister to these weaknesses.

Then, at paragraph 64, we can read:

64. Questionable Payment of Costs of Maintaining Leased Housing.

We may wonder if this concerns housing which was leased and for which the rent was subsequently increased without justification. In some measure, this is what the auditor wants to bring to the attention of the minister.

Paragraph 66 reads:

66. Lack of Authority to Credit Interest to Special Account.

67. Expenditures made Without Proper Authority.

Section 29 of the Post Office Act, R.S., chapter P-14, provides:

The Postmaster General may, without public advertisement, enter into a contract with any person operating a railway, air, bus or common carrier ship service, but no such contract involving an annual expenditure of more than five thousand dollars may be entered into without the approval of the Treasury Board.

Paragraph 68 deals with the duplicate payment of disability pensions. All mistakes done in the accounting, Madam Speaker—without the work of an auditor, an audit office, we could never know about them! I am sure it is like with unemployment insurance in those offices. Inevitably, the men who work in those offices are subject to mistakes like anyone else, and I think that is where you see the importance, the need of having an Auditor General's office that is absolutely free and can have access to all documents in order to inform Parliament on what is happening within the administration. Paragraph 69 deals with