

Supply

I do not suggest we should in any way duck our fair responsibility for foreign aid to developing nations. I ask only that the expenditure be controlled having regard to our deficit, our national debt, our unemployment and the general conditions of our economy in 1980. More than 15 per cent of the people in my riding are unemployed. We are borrowing to service our annual deficit and the national debt. We offer new programs or continue old ones on the basis of need, not on the basis of our ability to pay for the same. To explain: a family may "need" a new automobile but they put off the purchase until they can afford to pay for one. If national governments such as ours do not act in a similar manner, they will put in serious doubt the fiscal integrity of the whole country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacBain: The same can be said about many of our provincial governments, for example, Ontario.

The second expenditure item I want to discuss as evidence of lack of control is the annual expenditure for the support of our peace-keeping forces in Cyprus. Mr. Chairman, in 1964 Canada agreed, quite rightly, to supply a portion of the peace-keeping forces in Cyprus. This was to be a temporary assignment—a matter of months involving a limited expenditure. But what happened? The six-month mandate for the force has been renewed by the United Nations Security Council 36 times between 1964 and 1979, and I am told by those close to the scene that there is no end in sight. The island remains just as politically explosive as it was in 1964 and all attempts to negotiate a settlement have failed. These peace-keeping forces have more or less become accepted as a permanent fixture by the Cypriots and, I am afraid, by many Canadians.

What has been the total cost to Canada of this item of expenditure since 1964 over and above the pay and allowances of the military personnel concerned? The answer is more than \$36 million. In the fiscal year 1980-81 alone it will exceed \$4 million and the annual cost is rising fast. I put the question: Who has been controlling this vast expenditure since 1964?

Some hon. Members: Pierre Trudeau!

Mr. MacBain: It is an expenditure which in 1964 and perhaps for a few years thereafter was right and proper. Today it is out of control, as it has been for many years.

In December of 1978 when the Canadian ambassador to the United Nations spoke to the Security Council on the Cyprus question, he said:

We wonder how long the parties to this dispute can expect the international community to pour money and resources into a situation which they themselves do not seem to be working energetically toward alleviating... our limit of patience is approaching.

Again I cite this small item of expenditure merely as an example, chosen at random, for discussion purposes today.

It is my position that we, as members of Parliament, and the government itself, have abdicated responsibility for the development and control of these massive expenditures amounting to almost \$58 billion annually.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacBain: I say to all members of this House, in all seriousness, that this Parliament and this government must regain control over our annual expenditures. We must control our expenditures before the fact, not after the fact, and, needless to say, strict accountability is necessary and expected.

In my opinion, the next two decades will be years of no real growth in our GNP at best, and if there are reductions in the level of our GNP we ought not to be surprised. If growth is to level off or decrease, as I suspect it will, economies in government resulting from sufficiency in the supply of goods and services will not alone be the answer. There will be no landslide of new tax revenues—there is no need to look in that direction. We must gain control of expenditures both when they are in the process of being set and when they are being used. I have picked out only two expenditures at random to show that our expenditures are out of control.

Higher taxes are not the answer.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacBain: Better business management of departments of government would be helpful, but again that is not the answer, as I have said. We must get all expenditure items in line with our ability to pay for same. I have merely picked out two items in passing, so to speak.

How much time have we in which to take corrective action? In my opinion, the maximum time available to us is, at best, the normal life of this Thirty-second Parliament. The situation cries out urgently for remedial action. Time is fast running out. Moreover, in the timetable I have proposed no notice is taken of Russia's future oil shortage and that country's possible action to satisfy this shortage, or of any other scenario which would severely limit our oil imports. That is another story for another day.

● (1710)

Our national government collects and spends our taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. In our inability to control that process meaningfully our taxpayers, our business community and our Auditor General have little confidence. I for one—and I must say so regretfully—share that lack of confidence.

I am encouraged, as I have intimated, by the reference in the Speech from the Throne to steps which will be taken by this government, and I quote, "to make Parliament both more efficient and more responsive." I welcome such steps, as I know all hon. members will welcome them. As members of Parliament on both sides of the House we must work together to make our national government more efficient and more responsive.

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make two comments, essentially. The first comment is one I have made before, and I am sure hon. members of the House will agree with it. That is that we are all concerned about efficient and effective management of government resources, both human