

Waste and Mismanagement

there to be an over-expenditure of funds. Money is used for the wrong purpose when a government has been in power for a long period of time. In fairness I must say that even in the case of an NDP government the situation would not be different. I remember at one time meeting with cabinet ministers from across Canada, agriculture ministers, and finding that some who were members of my own party were more conservative in their attitude than others. In terms of dealing with waste and abuse this is a factor with any government which has been in power for very long.

Let us consider, for instance, this government which has been in power for many years. Very few cabinet ministers have not had lengthy cabinet experience. Those who have not had lengthy cabinet experience have had lengthy experience here as members. One such minister is the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations (Mr. Reid). Yet this government is not able to handle the very simple problem of Mrs. Dubé, who has been standing out in front of this building starving herself for 20 days. It is not able to solve her problem. Some hon. members say that her problem comes under provincial jurisdiction.

When Mrs. Dubé was in Quebec city and met the premier of Quebec, he told her that her problem was not his, that it was not something he could help her with, and that it was something that has to be solved in Ottawa. That is why she moved to Ottawa. She has been here ever since. The government has not been able to solve her problem or the problems of many other people. Mrs. Dubé's problem is simple. I understand that the ceiling in her basement was too low. Perhaps she will die on Parliament Hill. If we do not get around to having an election, there will still be 265 members here who cannot solve her problem.

It is no wonder that there is abuse of power. A number of things have been done as a result of the Gallup poll. One has been mentioned many times in this House. For partisan reasons the government has left office space vacant in the city of Ottawa by moving some operations to the city of Hull. This has cost hundreds of millions and will cost governments a considerable amount of money in the years to come. There may be some merit to this change. There has always been talk about solving Quebec's problems by giving Quebec more. However, there are now many office buildings in Ottawa which are empty. About one-fifth of Ottawa's office space has become vacant in the last five years simply because the government has moved some operations across the river. This was done to show the people of Quebec that they also have a role to play in our national capital. All the government has done, however, has been to confuse the people of the city of Hull who do not know what belongs to the province of Quebec, what belongs to the national capital commission, or whether Hull will be annexed with the city of Ottawa. I do not think this move has done anything for national unity, but unreasonable expenditures have certainly been made.

Hull is not the only place to which moves have been made. The government has decentralized. Veterans Affairs headquarters are being moved to Charlottetown. Can hon. mem-

bers imagine anything less necessary than moving the pension commission or the headquarters of a department without moving services? No hospital facility is being moved, just Veterans Affairs headquarters, where records are kept. A move is being made to Prince Edward Island just so that the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) will be elected forever. It means that if people from Vancouver are going to see the pension commission they will have a great time of it because they will see the whole country; they will travel from sea to sea. It may be nice for the old veterans who can make it, but many of them will not make it half way; they will not make it to Ottawa, and they will certainly not make it to Prince Edward Island.

● (2010)

What about the farmers wanting to talk about a farm loan? I read the other day in a press release of the Department of Agriculture that farmers will have to go to Camrose, Alberta, to see about a farm loan. We have put quite a bit more money into the Farm Credit Corporation, but for a farmer to get a loan now and to talk to a senior official, it will be necessary to go to Camrose, Alberta. I wonder if that will really happen physically. I wonder whether it will happen after the election. We would have to know whether a Liberal cabinet minister is elected in the province of Alberta, because otherwise it might be located in some other place.

Centralization is not saving us any money. It will cost a lot of money to people who are not able to provide the infrastructure services, but it will probably be able to provide the Liberal party with a few votes as they move agencies around the country. The other day I asked about moving the Department of Supply and Services to Matane, Quebec, because the cabinet minister was from that area. I made the crack that we are going to buy our pencils in Matane now rather than in Ottawa. To be fair to the minister, he came over to me privately, not to show up my ignorance but to point out that they only bought a few dollars worth of pencils in Matane, that they were still buying pencils in other places. If that is so, why do we bother with decentralization? Why do we bother with it if it will not bring some advantages to the minister and to his community?

Most Canadians are fed up with what they consider to be the waste of parliament. It was mentioned earlier today that we have no control over expenditures. Not long after this motion is passed or defeated, another motion will be put forward whereby we will approve millions and millions of dollars worth of estimates, most of which have not been considered by members. We have not made a change in \$20 million or \$30 million worth of estimates in the last ten years—my colleagues say, not even \$20 or \$30 worth. When we are in committee and we find that the government has misplaced, mislaid or misappropriated \$20, it will probably be found, but when you talk about \$20 million—no way!

Since we have changed the procedure on estimates, they now beautify the departments; they are a valedictory address to the individual department and to the people who work in it, and we are not able to decide as members of parliament what the