

Restraint of Government Expenditures

House of Commons shall in fact be a parliamentary institution worthy of the tradition of parliament and, above all, able to carry out the mandate parliament has of maintaining freedom. I have been a long time in this House, but I have no recollection since 1956 of having seen parliament flouted as it was today by the arrogant and insolent remarks made by the Prime Minister of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Indeed, it is unbelievable that anyone occupying the position he does, of high honour, should treat the House of Commons as though it were simply a group of members designed to carry out his wishes and forget the larger responsibilities that rest on all members.

As the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Graftey) pointed out, Mr. Speaker, we do not yet have the presidential system. I have never before known a prime minister who would not take the House into his confidence, would not ask for the views of the House but would simply arrogate to himself the right to speak to the people of Canada, giving the impression, as he does, that by being Prime Minister he is speaking for the parliamentarians in this institution. I have never known anything like it before. He has no business whatsoever to speak to the Canadian people and point out what he believes should be done, without having the viewpoint of parliament as a whole. To do otherwise is to arrogate to himself a power that comes of speaking over the broadcasting system of this country. I say it is wrong; it is dangerous.

An hon. Member: People are dangerous.

Mr. Diefenbaker: He is going ahead, however, because for parliament he cares nothing whatsoever.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Therefore, while in no way accepting his right to speak to the Canadian people without having consulted parliament in advance, I say the same period of time that he will receive should be made available to members of the opposition in the House of Commons so that their views will be placed before the Canadian people as well.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Have you ever heard, Mr. Speaker, anything to equal the condemnation of a government as is contained in the report of the Auditor General? I am not going to quote it because I do not want to run over my time, but summarized it is this: Management is grossly inadequate. Mr. Macdonell criticized the federal government for not even beginning to reform the way it presents its yearly estimates, despite 150 recommendations from the public accounts committee. He outlined in detail the degree to which this government has gone contrary to every democratic principle and has allowed the expenditures of this country to mount to a degree never reached before.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

When I was prime minister, the total expenditures amounted to some \$6 billion. Today they amount to some \$42 billion. As far as the deficit is concerned this year, I estimate it to be some \$5 billion, and the interest on borrowing that amount will cost the Canadian taxpayer \$1,100,000 per day. Yet there is no endeavour whatsoever to meet the situation. Today the Prime Minister showed his complete contempt for this institution. He is in a position of having a mathematical majority in the House and pretends that he can disregard the rights of members of this House—indeed, not only pretends but does.

What is the attitude of the Canadian people to this government, Mr. Speaker? They do not believe the Prime Minister when he speaks. They have lost their faith in the credibility of a government which has continued to take one stand and then, when criticized, the Prime Minister contends he never said what he said.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: That happens over and over again. I am not going to quote what the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) said in his letter to Liberal members, Mr. Speaker. Courageous in war, he was even more courageous to produce this letter because his future is very uncertain. He set out in detail what happened and he criticized the Prime Minister directly and indirectly.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Not fair.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Hon. John Turner, a fine parliamentarian who left here a year ago because he could not put up with the attitude of the Prime Minister—I think it would be fair enough to point that out as the reason—spoke the other day in Toronto. Whenever Liberals today want to look toward Mecca, they seem to turn to Toronto and the Hon. John Turner.

Mr. Roy (Laval): Speak to the bill.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I will be very happy to have any interruptions at any time as long as the individual stands so that he can be identified.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Turner said:

Canada has reached the "bottom of the line" as a credit risk in other countries.

He went on to set out in some detail what he thinks in this regard. Mr. Turner was in Europe recently, before the election in the province of Quebec. As we saw, the Prime Minister used recent events as a smokescreen to hide the fact that the government has been on a spending spree never before equalled in this country. When Mr. Turner was in Europe recently, he found that not only is Canada at the bottom of the line for credit among other countries, but that now we are on the list of countries of political risk. I wonder what that means. Has it anything to do with Castro and Cuba? I ask the