

proposed government expenditures. It is not a perfect document and it could stand improvement, but it is of considerable value when properly understood.

I think that if this motion were adopted it would result in a large waste of public funds in terms of thousands of printed pages of material delivered to members of parliament and probably the Senate that not only would not be read but would probably fill up half the office space on Parliament Hill. Surely this is not what we would consider as progress in our examination of the government's expenditure proposals.

In closing, I wish to state again my objection to this motion and recommend to the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore that he earnestly study the contents of the blue book and then ask himself whether he need take up any more of the valuable time of this House in seeking information that he does not really need.

Mr. Grier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member who has just spoken referred to a speech that I made in May when I admitted that, as a new member, I had difficulty in finding my way around the blue book and I was questioning whether it had all the values that the hon. member ascribes to it. I want to tell him that I am now a few months older, a little less new, and I find the blue book even less helpful than I had thought it might be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I have difficulty in accepting that kind of point of order. In effect, the hon. member is answering the hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner), and I think he should not seek the floor unless he has a real point of order which concerns the proceedings of the House.

Mr. Jack Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Grier), when he raises motions and inquiries of this sort, is in effect filling one of the roles of an opposition member. I think they have an obligation to speak out and to secure as much information as they can, no matter whether it eventually ends up in the waste-basket or in their closets as material which they can read when they are no longer serving as members of parliament. There is a large amount of information available to all hon. members. I think the hon. member, in presenting the motion in this way, has indicated that he wants information of a special type on a particular subject—and I think, frankly, that he is entitled to ask for it.

It has been my experience, in the very short time I have been here, that this government is probably the least secretive government that we have ever had in this chamber. I think the opposition parties weaken their own case when they sincerely seek information such as the hon. member has done here and then put on the order paper not five, ten, fifteen or twenty questions, but 259 motions for the production of papers. It is pretty difficult, then, to take them seriously and to believe they are sincere. It seems to me they should zero in on areas where they really want papers and where the government would be hard-pressed to come up with arguments as to why they should not be produced. Perhaps the debates would then be better debates. I am somewhat suspicious of the sincerity of

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opposition members when I see on the order paper 259 motions for the production of papers.

Second, on cursory examination today I noted that 3,424 questions have been placed on the order paper this session. The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Reid) has indicated that 80 per cent to 85 per cent of them have been answered. However, the opposition still say, "We want answers to the other 15 per cent." It may be precisely those questions which are the ones that should have been placed on the order paper in the first instance and should not have been smothered and buried under 3,424 others. It seems to me that if members of the opposition concentrated on questions to which they legitimately wanted answers, they would not weaken but would in fact strengthen their position. It is very easy to answer many questions.

● (1750)

Mr. Gleave: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Cullen: Yes.

Mr. Gleave: Is the hon. member trying to leave the impression that there is any operation of government which is not legitimately subject to the scrutiny of members of this House?

Mr. Cullen: No, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member was probably talking to his colleague rather than listening to my comments. I made just the opposite point. I think each department is subject to scrutiny, questioning and motions for the production of papers; but I do not think this scrutiny requires 3,424 questions and 259 motions. The point I am making is that members of the opposition parties, by putting that number of questions and notices of motions for the production of papers on the order paper, in fact weaken their case.

From my experience as a former parliamentary secretary, I can say that when we looked at many of the questions which came to our department we found them extremely easy to answer; and if we found that one out of 15 questions was difficult to answer, it was very easy for us to say we would answer 14 but would have to delay the answer to the fifteenth because it was too difficult, because we did not have the information, because the information was confidential or for some other reason. I say that you weaken your own case, when you are going after a particular department, if you ask too many questions and put on the order paper too many notices of motions for the production of papers.

Every department should be subject to the most careful scrutiny by members of the opposition and by members of the government party. Remember, Mr. Speaker, that before a minister produces a bill or a policy he has to clear it with his backbenchers. This is an area where we can focus on the things we are interested in, rather than blanketing the minister with 50 questions, of which only five are tough, with the result that he answers the other 45 first.

I think hon. members opposite could make better use of the money that has been made available to opposition parties for research and in that way find out what, in effect, is in the blue book of estimates. If the hon. member