

*Estimates*

**Mr. Johnston:** The fact is that the statements that have been made by my colleagues are correct. I see no conflict. If the hon. member wishes to sit in committee and review the items with the ministers responsible for the various ministries, I am sure they will be delighted to accept questions and supply the necessary details.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** Order, please. A considerable number of members wish to rise. I want to remind hon. members that we have royal assent at 5.45 p.m. or shortly thereafter. The President of the Treasury Board raised a point which I take to be quite in order, and that is that this is an opportunity for questions and answers, not for debate. I presume that hon. members are agreeable to short questions and short answers.

**Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South):** Mr. Speaker, I have two very short questions. Would the President of the Treasury Board table information from the compensation analysis branch on the number of people actually employed in the civil service to January, 1980-81? We could then compare that with the budget or with the allocation of 315,680 members of the civil service allowed in the estimates. I would point out that there is sometimes a difference of as much as 25,000 persons. Would he explain briefly how the numbers are rationalized and if he has some system of keeping control on what are necessary employees and why there is such a discrepancy between the authorization and the amount necessary.

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, there are frequently misunderstandings with respect to the force or strength of the public service. It is in part for that purpose I would say to the hon. member that we have prepared Chapter 5 in Part I of the estimates, which I think gives an adequate explanation of the different criteria used.

Let me point out a mistake which is often made by members of the public and of this House. The 315,000 does not represent people; it represents person-years. That means, for example, that if you employ one different person each day in the year, that is one person-year, theoretically. In fact, that is what it is. It is all measured in terms of person-years. The purpose of that and why it is used as a measure of control is fully explained in Chapter 5. It gives management more authority, more flexibility. It does not at all represent the physical number of people on strength at any given point in time. That is an important point to remember. It also refers to the people who are subject to Treasury Board control.

Other universes are used, for example, by Statistics Canada in terms of the size of the public service, which is a different yardstick. I suggest that my explanation is not nearly as complete nor as concise as that set out in Chapter 5. It was in response to the confusion that has arisen over the years that Chapter 5 was included in the estimates this year.

**Mr. Blenkarn:** It was stated in the budget that the public borrowing for interest charges this year would be \$10,250 billion. The minister has \$10.4 billion for his supplementary estimates. For the last ten or 11 weeks the government has

been borrowing at very close to 17 per cent interest on treasury bills and rolling those over at least at \$1 billion per week. Has the minister a Supplementary B for further interest costs, for this year, and how does he recognize his cost of interest for next year at \$12.35 billion when the budget showed \$12.265 billion? How does he rationalize this?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my commentary, the entire plan of the main estimates, including the public debt costs, is based on the budget assumptions of the Minister of Finance for the Canadian economy. He has not indicated any intent to revise his projections at this point. It is sheer speculation to say what he might opt to do. Any substantial revisions to these numbers, as the hon. member suggests, would be included in supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to follow up on a question posed by the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington), who spoke of our public debt and related it to the U.S. situation. We are paying roughly—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** Order, please. I want to remind the hon. member and all hon. members that statements have been made in response to the minister's statement. Statements are over. The only thing remaining now is the tradition of questions and these have to be brief. We have questions now, not statements.

**Mr. Mayer:** Mr. Speaker, I was not attempting to make a statement. I just wanted to give the background to the question so that I could get a full answer from the President of the Treasury Board. Could he give the House an opinion on the point at which our national debt becomes a burden? The U.S. is paying \$1 out of every \$10 tax dollars collected to service interest. We pay \$1 out of every \$4, and it seems that we may get to the point of paying one out of every three tax dollars to service debt. Does the minister have an opinion on the level at which this becomes prohibitive in terms of the functioning of a productive economy?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, with respect, I think that is more properly a question which should be addressed to the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, would the minister answer a question regarding the impact the reduction of federal moneys for the RCMP will have on municipalities and some provinces? Crime is increasing. The increased costs to municipalities will be as much as 95 per cent or 100 per cent in some cases. This will result in reduced policing and will give criminals a better chance to operate. Could the minister advise the actual amount of money being cut from the RCMP budget and whether there is still room and time for negotiations regarding this formula?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out that this exercise is not an examination of the estimates before committee. I would think that question ought to be put to the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan). I would like to be in a position