

S.O. 21

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OVER PUBLIC EXPENDITURES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, Auditor General Kenneth Dye yesterday expressed a very valid concern when he pointed to the increasing lack of parliamentary control over government expenditures, and lack of accountability to Parliament by Crown corporations and the bureaucracy. The scrutiny of government which Parliament is supposed to provide is increasingly difficult to achieve in any credible way, given the complexity of modern government and the fact Parliament has not yet been reformed to take this into account.

In the last session of this Parliament the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure made a number of recommendations which, if implemented, would have the effect of restoring to the House of Commons some of the power lost over the years through the evolution of the present bureaucracy, the concentration of power in the Prime Minister's office and Cabinet, and the role that party discipline, government party discipline in particular, has played in reducing the power of the House over other groups in the decision and policy making process.

Some of the recommendations of the Committee dealt with control of expenditures. Others dealt with the need for the House to have more control over its own life, and for its committees to be more independent of the Government both in staffing and the appointment of chair people. Another dealt with the selection process for Speaker of the House, and the need for the House to be more genuinely involved in the selection of the Speaker. These and other recommendations could go a long way toward creating a Parliament that would have the ability and the reformed self-understanding to resume the ancient role of the House of Commons as that forum which truly scrutinizes and makes government accountable to the people.

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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

SIZE OF STAFF AND BUDGET

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Government is not only incapable of effectively managing the country, but Ministers are also unable to control costs and over-expansion in their own offices. The Privy Council Office currently staffs 525 employees, with a budget of \$28.3 million. In comparison, the United States has only 393 people in the White House Office, with a yearly budget of only \$22.3 million. Even the United Kingdom requires only 69 persons to be employed at Number 10. The size of staff and budget does not proportionately represent the population either, as Canada's population is 25 million, the United States has 232 million, and the United Kingdom has a population of 55 million.

Canadian taxpayers are carrying an overloaded burden already without having to bear the cost of maintaining this huge bureaucracy. For the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to allow this is a clear indication of the contempt he holds for the Canadian public, and he should have the decency to call an election to allow the Canadian public to indicate the contempt they hold for him.

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THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, tonight in the Automotive Building at the CNE in Toronto, the Liberals are celebrating the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) second last farewell.

Taking into account the current state of the Gallup poll, I understand that in his honour the main course will be humble pie and burned grits. I am also told that the menu will be all finger food in recognition of the Prime Minister's propensity for saluting Canadians with one digit. There will also be, I am told, fish fingers, lady fingers and, of course, finger bowls. Senator Keith Davey's suggestion that the Cabinet act as waiters was scrapped because with their track record—they are all thumbs—there would be just too many thumbs in the soup bowls.

● (1410)

Bon appetit, and a special nod to John Napier Turner who, I understand, is receiving the fickle finger award for his diligent work in starting up the wild escalation in the federal deficit when he was Minister of Finance, and who, I understand, is departing shortly to join the Foreign Legion.

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[Translation]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

THE DESIRE TO DEVELOP A LIBERAL PHILOSOPHY

Mr. Marcel Roy (Laval): Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party government was defeated in the House on December 13, 1979. Following its defeat, we implemented a liberal philosophy which has meant a lot for Canadians, something for which I feel we should rejoice. For instance, this defeat enabled us to put forward the National Energy Policy. We are all aware of the part the Prime Minister has played in the Quebec referendum which was seeking the separation of that province from the rest of Canada. That was a major step for this Government. In addition, there were the patriation of the Constitution and Charter of Rights, all objectives which would never have been achieved under a Progressive Conservative government.

Mr. Speaker, I meant to emphasize, as indicated in the Speech from the Throne, that we intend to keep on developing a liberal philosophy through a Liberal Government in Canada.