

Financial Administration Act

these days, and that explains my slip of the tongue. Air Canada has always been losing money every time one of its aircraft lands in Trois-Rivières. But for his information, I say to the member for Lotbinière that we have been considering for the last few months the possibility of setting up a formula to replace Air Canada by something else, in case it should discontinue its service.

I am happy to inform the member for Lotbinière that we are dealing with this problem, which goes to show that quite often in this house, some opposition members blame government members for not dealing with their problems. But our working methods cannot be the same as the ones used by the official opposition. Its role is to blame the government for everything and anything at every opportunity, as ours is to accomplish concrete things and meet certain requirements. So we try to co-operate with ministers and their officials in order to get results. When such results are public, we are happy to announce them, because public interest is at stake.

As to Trois-Rivières, I should be glad to give some explanation to the member for Lotbinière, because since that city is a large center in the heart of Quebec, not only do I want all those services to be maintained but also to be extended and improved.

I think that with the plans under consideration, if Air Canada should discontinue its service, we would get an even better service than the existing one, since the only flights now are in the morning and at night.

Mr. Speaker, the criticisms made could be summed up as follows: the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said that those are steps in the right direction, but they are long overdue. As to the member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), he feared that parliament might lose some of its control over public funds. The hon. member for Lotbinière said the same thing, while giving me the impression at times of contradicting himself, because he said, at one point: I realize it is a heavy burden for a comptroller of the Treasury or a minister, and that duties must be distributed, yet parliament should not be discharged of its responsibilities, and he added: members should even retain some administrative control. It might be better to agree on the term "administrative control", because if 265 members take it upon themselves to administer the country, we shall be able to quote the old saying: "Too many cooks spoil the broth".

To my mind, control of the taxpayers money is divided so that the whole question will no longer depend solely on the Comptroller of the Treasury who, of necessity, cannot be a specialist in 26 or 28 different fields; it will not be the responsibility of the deputy minister, who knows what goes on in the department and manages it in close co-operation with his minister who in turn is answerable to parliament. In this way, better control of the taxpayers' money is assured because, in the final analysis, the deputy minister will only have the power to act within the limits of the credits we will have voted.

As for the expenditures he will eventually have authorized, they will be studied by the house when financial statements are studied. The government therefore controls the public funds.

Mr. Speaker, to my mind, all hon. members are of good-will and recognize that the new system of parliamentary committees gives us a far more adequate control than we ever had over public funds, since the estimates are studied in sections in the committees assigned to analyse them, where we can examine all the votes with the help of high officials.

We can question them and ask them for the whys and wherefores of various situations. I should like to give an example to show precisely how efficient this control is.

The committee of which I am a member spent part of the day yesterday with high officials of a Crown corporation. We discovered by talking with them that there was a vote of \$5 million which will not be needed this year. We will therefore recommend to parliament that this vote be cancelled in the estimates; that is one type of control hon. members can exercise.

This could also occur in other cases. I can give more details on this particular instance, Mr. Speaker. This year the Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Company applied to the government for a \$5 million loan for an investment on which I shall not dwell because it would be too long. Now that the officials of the Company have brought in their estimates, they have discovered that their profits for last year were such that they could now get along on their own. We are therefore going to cancel this item from the proposed estimates. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, any fear about parliament being deprived of its control over public funds is sheer nonsense a fanciful delusion. On the contrary, with the present system of parliamentary committees to scrutinize the estimates, I believe hon.