

which committees are springing up is becoming somewhat bewildering, and the tendency of those committees to bog down is becoming equally discouraging.

We now have another important committee looming on the horizon to deal with this matter. It is not to be suggested that we are wishing to stall in any sense, but this is a most important matter affecting the Consolidated Revenue and Audit Act and the legislation regulating the treasury and other matters concerning the public accounts. These matters are up for general revision at such infrequent intervals that it seems to me this committee must undertake its work in the determination not necessarily to delay but also not to allow any undue pressure to be put upon it to finish up its work in a hurry so that all considerations which should be gone into cannot be dealt with. Apart from the multiplicity of committees, this particular committee should not allow itself to be placed under pressure because this session is presumably going to wind up before Christmas, and thus give this task incomplete attention.

That having been said, I should like to turn for a moment to some general considerations which occur in discussing the Consolidated Revenue and Audit Act. As I have said, it is not desirable at this time to go into detail, but this resolution does give us an opportunity to say a word or two on the whole question of government expenditure and government economies. I am not going to rehearse all the controversy which has been raised in the past over whether the government is wasting our money. Charges have been made to that effect and in my view they are fully substantiated by the review of the estimates for the year and the tabling of the special tabulation of expenditures with this year's estimates.

I do feel that advantage should be taken of this opportunity to advocate a control by parliament through properly constituted agencies over government spending so that parliament itself can effect some economies. I think it will be agreed when we consider what has happened in the past few years that it is fairly obvious that parliament has not had an opportunity to bring about any savings in the expenditure of public funds. I am referring particularly to the procedure followed when we review the estimates. We know from experience that any suggestion we make that an item be reduced is regarded as a vote of want of confidence in the government. That was our experience when we moved a reduction in an item two years ago. The minister reacted immediately and said

that the reduction would be taken as a vote of want of confidence, and the suggestion was dealt with upon that basis.

It must be remembered that practically the only opportunity of parliament to directly control the spending of money is through our review of the estimates each year. If the suggestion of a reduction is to be treated as a vote of want of confidence then that opportunity becomes completely illusory. It seems extremely likely that in the course of things that approach to the question in committee of supply will continue. I do not think it is unfair for me to say that unless the government has a change of mind we will not be able to accomplish any savings by the review which we give to estimates in committee of supply. We can get explanations and we can perhaps expose extravagance, but I am referring to what I regard as one of the most important tasks of parliament, that is to bring about by its own control over the expenditure of money reductions in expenditures which will be reflected in the amount of money the government takes from the people through the taxes.

I feel it is important in considering the legislation to be based on this resolution to approach the matter from that point of view and to see whether this revision provides a method by which parliament can effectively curtail expenditures after a proper review and discussion of the proposed expenditures on their merits, rather than having such proposals treated as indicating a want of confidence in the government.

It seems to me that a method could be devised under which all parties in the house and all hon. members could study proposed expenditures in an impartial way, in the sense of its being non-partisan, and without every suggestion that a reduction be made being taken as a reflection upon the wisdom of the government. When almost every day brings situations which increase the likelihood of expenditures in order to meet them, surely every opportunity must be given of finding ways and means of reducing expenditures. We should have the opportunity of examining whether the burden placed upon the government to meet these crises is not so intolerable that our whole system might be in danger of breaking down. I think it is axiomatic that at the present time the most important task facing this government and all public legislative bodies is to find ways and means of reducing expenditures and effecting economies without at the same time either curtailing essential defence expenditures or introducing such a rigorous elimination of spending as in effect to bring about a break-down of the actual