

Mr. Mazankowski: Someone says "the national interest". I well remember back in 1972 when the Liberal party had a majority of seats in only one province of this country. That, to my mind, does not indicate the kind of support from coast to coast which the party should have if it wants to govern effectively.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until 2 p.m.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

[*English*]

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

● (1412)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. When the House recessed at one o'clock the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) had the floor. He still has 24 minutes remaining of his allotted time.

Mr. Mazankowski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The man who has been selected to assume the role of Canada's first comptroller general, Harry Rogers, brings with him a very excellent reputation. I do not know the man personally, but on studying his background and his credentials it is quite obvious that the minister and the government have undertaken to select the most capable person available, with the appropriate professional qualifications and a proven record of outstanding competence and achievement. As other hon. members of the House have indicated, I too certainly want to wish him well in the undertaking of his deliberations because, as we have pointed out on this side of the House, he will need all the help he can get in trying to restore some order to the financial mismanagement of this government. This is particularly true when you consider this rather innocuous bill.

It has to be made clear once again that the appointment of a comptroller general will not in any way improve the resource allocation process, which is largely a political process. The government will continue to do what it has been doing, but the comptroller general will have the responsibility to ensure that the funds which have been allocated to the respective departments and programs are spent in an appropriate fashion, and that there is not any misappropriation or mispending of those funds after the allocation process has taken place.

I presume it will also be his responsibility to ensure that appropriate checks, balances and procedures are followed in this process. In many respects that process will complement the work of the Auditor General. If there is any misappropriation or questionable misappropriation of funds by the government, that will remain an issue to be debated in this chamber or in committee.

Financial Administration Act

This is another area in which exists a very major deficiency and weakness of the parliamentary process. There can be absolutely no question whatsoever about the suggestion that we do have a very serious problem of financial mismanagement and lack of financial control within the Government of Canada. It is important to reiterate that this did not happen overnight. It has been a continuing cancer that has developed over the years. The fact is that the government was reminded of this. The former Auditor General, Mr. Maxwell Henderson, pointed out in his reports to the House of Commons time and time again the abuses of this government, its contraventions of the Financial Administration Act, its misappropriation of funds, and the fact that value was not being received for the dollars spent.

The government did not heed that advice and looked upon Mr. Henderson as an enemy of the government. Because the government refused to heed his warnings we now find ourselves in a situation, referred to by the Auditor General in his 1976 report in very categorical terms, where the government and, indeed, parliament, have lost effective control of the public purse in Canada. This bullheadedness on the part of this government, and its easy-come easy-go philosophy, can best be indicated by the fact it is absolutely and inherently incompetent, looking upon the expenditures of funds in a manner that will enhance its own political opportunities rather than having regard for the over-all interests of Canada.

There can be no doubt in anybody's mind that spending has gotten out of control and that parliament has lost control. This government has lost control. Neither parliament nor the government has the desired wherewithall to check on the extravagances and wastes of many of those spending programs funded by the government. This is even worse when you have a government that, because of the change in our rules and our current mechanism, is not held accountable to parliament and thereby accountable to the taxpayers of Canada.

With this situation we will continue to have this kind of waste, misallocation of funds, and extravagance of which we have seen too much in the past. We will continue to have a government that is more determined to save itself politically than to impose sound financial management control measures on the public purse; a government whose primary objective is to remain in power at any or all expense to the taxpayer. Surely that kind of government is not in the best interests of the country or its taxpayers.

We have such a situation at this time going into an election year. We noticed the same situation in 1972 and during the period preceding the 1974 election. This is a government committed and dedicated to spending its way into power. It is buying your support and mine, Mr. Speaker, with our tax dollars.

All hon. members of this House are concerned that parliament is no longer an effective check or watchdog on the expenditure of public funds in this country. We have talked often about revising the form of estimates; we have talked often about ways and means of improving the way estimates are dealt with in committee; and we have talked about reform