

Parliament

financial system, we must subject the entire process to the closest possible scrutiny by agencies outside the administrative process. Parliament is outside the administrative process. In business, the ultimate consequence of waste and inefficiency is bankruptcy. In government it is just more waste and inefficiency. There are no automatic checks. They must be built in carefully and deliberately. That is the reason I made this suggestion.

Second, there must be a spirit of economy which pervades the approach of everyone connected with government. It is easy to waste \$4,000 or \$5,000. It is much easier to waste that \$4,000 or \$5,000 than it is for some taxpayer to earn it.

● (2012)

Finally, here and elsewhere we must develop an awareness of how much government spending and activity is appropriate. We do not have the machinery to examine that conflict. The role of government in our society has been growing steadily for over a century. Serious problems have arisen only in the last two decades. Recently governments have assumed that only they can alleviate inequities of opportunity, redistribute wealth, prime the economy, and offer incentives and direct support for all kinds of ancillary activity; that they can do all of this by not balancing the budget year after year, by rolling up a tidal wave of debt to engulf future generations, and by debasing the currency. We should begin to ask ourselves if that is relevant and proper. I say it is not, and we must examine that in parliament.

Recently governments have attempted to direct a complex modern economy by jettisoning all accepted principles of financial prudence. It will be the job of this parliament, if it does its job, to bring governments back to the lessons of financial prudence.

The basic lesson we have learned from all this is that men are not nearly as smart as they imagine themselves to be, and that much of what has been called planning is simply tragic over-confidence. I do not pin this government with all of the blame. Governments everywhere are to blame. The problem with the process in which Your Honour and I work is that it provides neither the opportunity, machinery nor attitude to say that parliament is the place where governments should be called to account for those things which they do that are good and also those things which are bad, wasteful and irrelevant.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council on a point of order.

Mr. Pinard: During his speech I interrupted the hon. member on a point of order, asking for leave to put a question, and he suggested I should wait till after his speech. Do I have leave to put that question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There must be consent not only from the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) but also

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

from the House, because the hon. member's time has expired. Is there consent for the parliamentary secretary to put a question?

[*English*]

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Pinard: I thank hon. members and I will be brief. In his speech, the hon. member referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, which in 1976 examined three subcommittee reports. I would like to know whether the hon. member is in a position to indicate at this point that his caucus support the recommendations of each of the subcommittee reports, or whether he is ready to commit his caucus to acceptance of those three subcommittee reports that were tabled before the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization on September 30, 1976?

[*English*]

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I would not be telling tales out of school to say that we did not agree completely with them, but there was substantial agreement with substantial portions of the report.

Speaking for my party, we would be quite prepared to see two things happen respecting the House of Commons: the reconvening of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization where that matter and others, and particularly the matter I raised, could be considered in depth; and we would be prepared to see the televising of the work of committees so that their work could be enhanced even in the situation in which they find themselves. I would be very pleased if the hon. member would carry that message back to the government House leader.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is a non-confidence one condemning the government for imposing changes in the rules and procedure of the House and its standing committees, calculated and designed to stifle or eliminate parliamentary examination and control of public expenditures, etc. In other words, the attack is upon the government through its failure to bring about parliamentary reform for better performance of the committees.

I cannot but observe in the beginning that I would agree with what the House leader of the opposition just said, that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization would be a most appropriate committee to consider the suggestions made by my colleague on this side of the House. Surely there is no suggestion that the work of that committee, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, or many other committees, has in any way been impeded by what the government has done.

Tonight I should like to talk simply about the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and its contribution toward the study of public expenditures, and how this has evolved recently