Health, Welfare and Social Affairs are people generally interested in issues concerning health and welfare; Members who sit on the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture are people interested in communications; and Members who sit on the committee dealing with Indian affairs and northern development are people interested in those concerns. The tendency is not to cut back on an item of government concern in which Members are interested. In the whole presentation of Estimates, we have Estimates coming forward in which no effort is made to priorize, no effort is made at frugality, and no effort is made at determining what should be an expenditure that is appropriate for the Government.

As well, we have budgets coming forth and we have borrowing authority Bills coming forth. Members from all sides of the House rise and say that it is too much and that the Government is spending more than the country can afford. But when the Estimate comes before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry, Members on that committee want to spend more money. We have the strange notion that Members of Parliament are saying, "Cut expenditures. Let us priorize it. Let us be frugal. Let us stay within our ability to pay the bills for the taxes received", and at the same time are asking for greater expenditures.

We have had debates in this session demanding increased expenditures for education, for health, for pensions, for forestry, and so on. Those are all valid concerns and things for which we as Members of Parliament are receiving demands from our constituents.

The fact is that we are only able to collect about $70 billion in the current years. We are going to spend approximately $100 billion. Therefore, there will be a shortfall of approximately $30 billion. Obviously, we are going to try to spend ourselves rich and spend on programs that we cannot afford in total. That is because as Members of Parliament we have not been honest with ourselves; we have not directed our attention to the things we want, to what we want from government, and to what priority we want them to have.

I do not think there is any question, certainly from my point of view, that the senior citizens in this country must be well looked after. We must also ensure that there is an education system which will train our young, and even our not-so-young, so that they can participate fully in the economic activities of the country. There is no question that we must provide for a proper defence of Canada. However, even these things must be placed in priority. Where do we place these things in priority when we are looking at a debt of $147 million, money which has been set aside as a subsidy to insulate people's houses? Where do we put the $187 million—that is the money, if my memory serves me correctly, that was set aside to pay people for new furnaces in order that they could convert from oil to wood, natural gas or something of that nature? Where do we put a program which provides for almost $2 billion this year to drill holes for oil, when the price of oil is dropping and when, in fact, we have all sorts of resources that are already known for example, in the tar sands area in Alberta? Where do we put that $2 billion that is paid to companies, not for finding oil, but largely on the basis of their shareholding and whether that shareholding is Canadian? Even though the tulip show in the national capital is absolutely magnificent, where do we put the $107 million that was set aside for the National Capital Commission? That budget, I would say, is almost equal to the total budget of the City of Mississauga for parks, administration, education—for everything put together. What priority do we give to these amounts?

Our attention has not been called and we have not been asked, "Now look, do you want $900 million to go to the CBC or do you want to pay senior citizens this amount of money in a pension?" If the choice were there, where would we put our priority? For too long we have said that we want our cake and we want to eat it too and, thank you very much, put ice cream on it as well. It is the obligation of Members of Parliament to be responsible, but this House has not been responsible.

Therefore, what we ought to have in this House is a committee—you might call it a Treasury Board type of committee—that would look at the total ambit of government activity, every estimate coming forward, and that would put a priority on it. Some things are absolutely necessary, some things are perhaps not as necessary, and some other things have a pretty low priority. They are perhaps desirable, but not necessary.

We have the ability to charge our citizens taxes. What we have tended to do is not only to take the money in taxes, but charge yet unborn citizens taxes for expenditures made by us through the use of the borrowing system. It may be proper for us to borrow against the income of the taxes that will be paid by citizens yet unborn, but that should be a question of priorizing.

• (1710)

What this motion attempts to do, Sir, is to bring to the attention of this Parliament the obligation of Parliament to take a look at the various expenditures of Government, come to grips with where the money should be spent, and make Parliament responsible for the order in which the money is spent. Almost all of the money we spend in that blue book of ours has some value. It is perhaps money well spent. However, is it well spent in priority?

If this Parliament had a committee which deliberately looked at these things, I suggest, Sir, that we would not have the kind of situation where a leadership candidate such as the Minister of State for Economic and Regional Development (Mr. Johnston) is going around the country saying that he has grave doubts as to the value of the DRIE program and that he thinks his own Ministry, MSERD, should perhaps be abolished. We have had other candidates for the leadership of that Party saying that perhaps they could eliminate three whole Departments. Parliament would have dealt with these matters on a priority basis. Why would Parliament have done that? Because Parliament and its committee would have been charged with making sure that the money which is available is spent in priority. We would then quite apparently have a situation where Parliament would say, "Yes, it is important