

*Main Estimates*

the standing committees of the House about the estimates, and so on.

The President of the Treasury Board will appear before the standing committee, as will other ministers, in defence of the estimates tabled today. Certainly we will proceed with statements by opposition spokesmen in respect of the statement made by the President of the Treasury Board. While that is taking place, I wonder if some thought might be given to whether it was ever the intention, in this particular instance, for the House to attempt to question the President of the Treasury Board when he is simply initiating the practice of being questioned in one way or another for the next three months.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, there is no point in my continuing questions. I am all right; I am in the lifeboat. I have had an opportunity afforded to me to question the minister and his officials on certain points. I hope that I can keep my remarks short. I would not like this practice basically to change from that wherein ministers are making statements. We can keep our statements short and leave our colleagues to put questions. Keeping that in mind, I think we can get along. I would prefer to start that procedure rather than on my own, at this moment, to eliminate the questions.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, I am inclined to agree with my hon. friend. If the minister makes a very factual and limited statement, obviously that can be responded to in the same way. If, however, as was noticeably the case here, the minister makes an exculpatory statement in which he assigns to himself certain virtues and benefits about which there may be some doubt, he leaves himself open to questioning. As far as I am concerned, we do not intend to pursue that procedure at this time. I utter that as a word of caution with respect to the limited time the minister may have to occupy his present position. He should restrict the nature of his statement and not invite the kind of questions which the statement he just made does invite.

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that I appreciate the gesture of the minister in giving us an opportunity to look at the estimates. Second, may I say that this year the version of "How your tax dollar is spent"—having had an opportunity of going through it—is a considerable advance over last year. Hon. members and the public will be well served by this document; that is, those who are looking for it.

There is one word of caution that I want to bring forward. This relates to the spirit of the comments of my colleague, the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), with regard to the remarks of the minister being somewhat self-exculpatory. There is a great danger at this time in looking at percentages and constant dollars. The use of percentages is totally deceptive. In addition, the practice or the method of using percentages as much as possible in the format of the old blue book is present.

Here I would like to call attention to the good work being done by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, arising out of the Auditor General's recommendations regarding these estimates. That advantage will only appear next year and I am not going to make a

statement in that regard; I will save it until we have the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) before us.

In the first paragraph of his statement the minister talked about \$38.4 billion for budgetary items, and \$1.1 billion for non-budgetary items, totalling \$39.5 billion. If one goes to page 1 of the what I call the small blue book, one sees that the main estimates for budgetary expenditures, including the cost of old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, have a projected total of \$42,150 million, and not \$39.5 billion. We have to look for further estimates this year. There is a reserve of \$1.5 billion that goes in. There is a separate item of half a billion dollars. Then there are things such as loans, investments and advances of \$2,750 million, for a total of \$42,150 million. That is what we are talking about for this year. When the minister talks about a percentage of 16 per cent, it is this latter figure that is being used.

If one goes to page eight of the booklet "How Your Tax Dollar is Spent", the total of columns 2 and 3 is in actual expenditures starting in 1972-73 all the way through to 1976-77 and showing the percentage increases. We see that on the basis of 1973-74 over 1972-73, there was a 24 per cent increase. The following year, 1974-75, there was a 27 per cent increase. In 1975-76 there was a 16 per cent increase, and this year there is a 16 per cent increase. With the greatest respect, that is a lot of hokum. It is worse than the shell game.

While \$42,150 million is roughly 116 per cent of \$36,500 million, the increase of some \$5,550 million is already on something that is 116 per cent of the previous year. If there were established a base year as we have in the computation of the consumer price index, we could find out what the expenditures are today compared with what they were ten years ago, and index it. We see that today the consumer price index is something like 180 compared with the base year, 1961. If we wanted to take the \$6.3 billion of expenditures by this administration in the base year 1963, and take the \$42 billion estimated for this year, the index would be up by some 600 per cent. Then we could see what money they have been spending and what money they have been collecting from the taxpayer. We could see, also, on the basis of a constant dollar, the true relationship and we would be better able to determine the influence which government spending and monetary policy has on the consumer price index.

● (1540)

Hon. members should be very careful about accepting the glib figures presented to us. The minister almost sprained his shoulder congratulating himself on maintaining a rate of growth of 16 per cent—sixteen per cent of 116, and that comes to something rather lower in my book. If we turn to some of the other information which has been provided to us, we see where increases in expenditure arise. The minister has indicated that some amounted to 5 per cent, some to between 14 and 20 per cent, and up and up. There were even some that dropped. I understand that ten ministries are responsible for 80 per cent of the increases in expenditure. According to page 11 of the fact sheet, this year the Unemployment Insurance Commission is going to ask for \$1,702 million, an increase of some 90 per cent over the previous year. But this does not cover 1966-67. It is not a forecast. It is merely refilling the pot, because