

Parliament

came here. They came along with the election of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). What is an omnibus bill? Everyone knows it is a bill which deals with a little of just about everything, in which abortion, firearms and hanging can all be mixed up. I say that type of bill should never have existed. It is used to force the opposition into passing bills, parts of which it objects to, but which it cannot refuse to pass because in so doing it would also deny passage of provisions it agrees with. Those are premeditated bills, but they are unfair to the people in the sense that when abortion is being discussed, abortion alone should be dealt with; when firearms are being discussed, they alone should be the topic of discussion. Let us vote on firearms, let us discuss firearms, but let us not mix firearms with abortion. Come on! They do not concern the same type of guns at all! That is why I say a clear distinction must be made between topics, each one of which should be dealt with in a separate bill. That question has often been brought up in the House, but nothing ever changed, and with every new session, we are being faced with new omnibus bills. Packages are made which contain things we do not want; but we have to accept the works, if we want to pass what we agree with in the package. I think it is unfair both for hon. members and the people.

I should like to bring up a third topic. I said I would be brief but I should like to say one word about the sittings of the standing committees. For a long time now, requests have been made—and for a while I believe those requests were met—to the effect that standing committees never sit during the sittings of the House for the simple reason that, in the case of a party like ours, with only eight members, when two are sick, of the six left, if three or four standing committees meet while the House sits, no one is left to attend the sitting of the House. We have to stay here. The others are in committee. I find it unfair. The major parties can manage all right, but a small party cannot, Mr. Speaker. Even in the major parties, some members would like to sit on committees, or at least listen to the discussions, but they cannot go. If these committees sat when the House is not sitting, everything would be fine. That went on for a few years, but we have gone back to our old habits, and it is still with us today that habit of sitting at the same time as the House. The number of sittings is also stepped up, probably because the fewer members there are, the quicker it goes. I do not know, but if those standing committees are unwanted, why are they not simply abolished. I find that standing committees are a good thing. That is where we can seriously study the legislation, ask the questions we want, but at least give us the chance to attend the discussions.

Finally, there is the matter of uncontrolled expenditures. I sit on the public accounts committee and I have heard some pretty good ones on that topic. And this has been going on for years, it did not start this year. Some people feel that what is going on there this year is scandalous. I have been seeing things like that for 16 years. The government seems to remain

[Mr. Gauthier (Roberval).]

speechless, unconcerned in front of this. At first, they listen to the criticisms made by the Auditor General, then they lose interest. I would even go further, when the Auditor General does too much, they replace him.

It seems to me that since we do have an Auditor General, we should listen to the advice he gives to the government. Officers can make mistakes, that is understandable, but errors costing \$1 billion, \$1½ billion or \$2 billion must be looked into. Take this year, for example, they are introducing budget after budget, however budgets are becoming a practical joke. They present a budget for \$47 billion with a \$14 billion deficit, then they borrow \$17 billion: \$7 billion to reimburse old debts and \$10 billion to pay for what is coming. What? We do not know. It becomes a childish game. I think we shall have to take action to try to improve our control over the expenditures of the country if we cannot stop that flow of expenditures, unauthorized expenditures, expenditures which are such that even people in the department have the surprise of their lives. Even the minister in his own department had the surprise of his life. We should ask the House to try to do something, not simply receive the report of the Auditor General and criticize it. We are there in committee, and we criticize the report of the Auditor General; we do not listen to the Auditor General's criticism, we do not take any action afterwards. I am sure that no action will be taken afterwards. If it goes on like that, it is useless for the Auditor General to come and table his report. It is useless to try to examine new methods to control expenditures.

Finally, it is said that in the past the Speaker's decisions used to be appealed. Today no appeal can be lodged. They say that it is an amendment. There has been a development, since we are no longer in a position to appeal. It is unfortunate, but I think that no appeal against the ruling of the Speaker should be allowed, because some time ago, when appeals against the rulings of the Speaker were authorized, I do not know how many useless votes were taken to harass the Speaker. I think the Speaker's task is difficult enough as it is. I think it was advisable to pass that regulation. We must acknowledge it and as long as we have some means to observe the proprieties it will be a good thing, because the people are watching us in the House and we hear criticisms every day. Do you know the people feel that the most striking feature of the House is the decorum. Well, I wish to keep that image before the public, that image of respectability given by the members who appear as responsible individuals who, in the interest of the people, want regulations to act freely as true administrators.

● (1702)

[English]

Mr. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I listened with attention to the mover of the motion, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), and the reply of the hon. Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations (Mr. Reid). I must say that nothing indicates the problem facing parliament and