

get on with controlling the spending of the government of Canada which is very important in our fiscal planning.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, one must ask is this really a bill to control government expenditures? Or, is it instead a measure intended to try to convince Canadians that this Conservative government is something it obviously is not and that is a good manager of its own and this country's affairs.

As I said when this measure was first outlined in a discussion paper last July, this proposal is really nothing more than cosmetic. It simply puts into legislative form what the government should be doing anyway. That is working to live within its own budgetary projections.

This is the government that boasted before the current recession began that it was deliberately inducing a slow-down. These were the very words of the Prime Minister. As the Conference Board of Canada confirmed, this government deliberately created our first made-in-Canada recession through high interest rate and high dollar policies.

This government gave us the GST hitting at consumer confidence and consumer spending. In doing so it has deepened and prolonged the recession. This government came into office pledging to reduce the public debt but it actually doubled to \$400 billion since 1984 when this government was first elected.

The high interest rate policies of the Bank of Canada that this government supported and agreed with added billions to its own borrowing costs and therefore to this government's expenditures and made its debt and deficit problems worse and not better.

This government's cutbacks of its transfer payments to the provinces really transferred its deficit problems to them and this has been weakening our health, education and social welfare programs, programs essential to the well-being of Canadians and the well-being of the economy.

Now the government is saying it needs legislative authority to keep its spending to the cumulative total outlined in the legislation over the five-year period between fiscal 1991-92 and fiscal year 1995-96.

If the government was effectively running, effectively managing, its own administration, why does it need this

legislation? Is it saying the cabinet ministers and their senior officials are not living within the expenditure framework set by the Minister of Finance in his budget? If that is the case, why does the Prime Minister not simply fire them? He obviously has the authority to do so.

We have a parliamentary system with a Prime Minister and cabinet, the government, being in office because it is supported by a majority of the members of the House of Commons. Without that majority no government in a parliamentary system can stay in office. There is not here the separation of the legislative and administrative branches of government with the possibility of conflict between them and the separate spending decisions by the legislative branch we see in the United States, a situation that led to the legislation in that country mentioned by the minister, and similar to what the government is proposing here.

The House of Commons finance committee visited Washington in the course of its study of the government's discussion paper that preceded this bill. The committee's report said, and I invite the House to look at paragraph 32 on page 7:

Many of the Americans contacted by the committee wondered why it is necessary to impose budgetary controls in a parliamentary system of government. After all, if a government is powerful enough to enact such controls, it should be able to control its own fiscal policy and any future government would not be bound by such controls since the enabling legislation could easily be amended. Such commentators noted that under a congressional system it was opposing and immovable congressional interests which led to budgetary controls in the first place, in particular, it was the conflict between the Congress and the administration which caused the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act and its successor, the Budget Enforcement Act, to be passed.

The committee report goes on in paragraph 35 to say:

Budget control legislation is a distinctly American approach to problems arising in a quite unique legislative environment. Just because the American system might meet such controls does not imply that the Canadian parliamentary system would necessarily benefit from the same approach despite the fact that both countries face similar fiscal problems.

By the way, the report was supported, including these quotations, by the Conservative members of the committee, where they have the majority.

When one considers these paragraphs from the committee report, no wonder I say this bill is cosmetic. Under our parliamentary system, this bill could be amended not only by the subsequent government that