

*Government Spending*

only six months while the committee should be able to meet over a period of at least eight months to be able to implement the recommendations and carry out the mandates specified in the Auditor General's report.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that it would be appropriate to amend the rules of the House so that the report of the Auditor General of Canada could be automatically referred to this committee as soon as it is tabled, whether or not Parliament is sitting. I also believe that one of the duties of this committee should be to ensure that the recommendations can be immediately implemented by the government.

Indeed, it is useless to have allotted days like this one where any member may stand up and say either that the government is spending too much or is not spending enough, or even that it is spending just enough. It is absolutely useless to have such debates. I believe that if we want to be efficient, we should instead, as concerns the 33 paragraphs of the Auditor General's Report which did not bring about any change in our administrative procedure, ask each minister responsible for these paragraphs why no action was taken within his or her department to implement the recommendations made by the Auditor General. This would seem much more positive, more effective and more in line with the interest of Canadians. This would be better than simply pointing out the construction of a pool, the purchase of two cars, whether they be Cadillacs or Volkswagens, or exaggerated expenses for the fitting of an aircraft carrier or something else.

A Cadillac does not mean much in a \$14 million budget. The important is that the administration that has made such a decision should follow the correct procedure and the instructions given by the controlling authorities within the department making the purchase. Once the ticket is bought, once the expense has been made, it is all very well to come and say: the government spent too much. It is much more demanding before making the expense to control the decision which was taken when the budgetary estimate was made.

Has anyone in this House questioned the estimates of the Department of Supply and Services when the money to be spent on that car was accounted for? Not one member of this House pointed out that an item in the estimates should have been deleted. And yet, once the money is spent, they are shocked and they make of it a matter of nationwide proportions. Madam Speaker, it is not an indication of departmental or public responsibility to question after the fact decisions one has been partly responsible for through one's silence and submissiveness.

Madam Speaker, if we are to amend our procedure, I think we should do so at the decision-making level before expenses are actually effected. Madam Speaker, if the Committee on Public Accounts is to prove useful, I think its report should not be tabled in this House when its sittings are completed and remain a dead letter. We should in fact discuss the third report of the Committee on Public Accounts, which was tabled in the House in March and was never debated by opposition members. No one ever requested the minister mentioned in one of those recommendations to appear in this House. Madam Speaker, if opposition days are to serve some purpose, they should be used to improve the administrative procedures and the

[Mr. Joyal.]

manner in which financial controls are exercised within departments.

It is utopian to believe that a minister today controls every decision made in his department. Quite often the minister does not know how the expenses provided for in the estimates are effected. Only after the fact is the general public informed that such or such expense was carried out according to the budgetary estimates passed by this House.

I think, Madam Speaker, that one of the major amendments this House and the opposition should suggest—and I do not think there is any objection on this side of the House—would be precisely to use one of the opposition days to implement the recommendations in the report of the Auditor General which have not already prompted changes and amendments from the departments concerned.

I think, Madam Speaker, we already made a step in that direction: 55 paragraphs of last year's report of the Auditor General have already given rise to changes and amendments. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) wrote to the Auditor General of Canada and told him that 55 paragraphs had been immediately acted upon by the departments concerned; 11 paragraphs were also being examined. Eventually, action would be taken but 33 paragraphs remained untouched. That is what troubles me, Madam Speaker: a committee sits for six months, the report is tabled, it contains a list of government expenditures, the opposition leaves it on the table but when it comes to talking about extravagant government expenditures we are told a lot of rubbish and the discussion is not based on actual expenditures and actual faults of the administration. I think, Madam Speaker, that if we want to be consistent with the institutions of this House, if we want to give them the responsibility, the respect they must have in our parliamentary system it is by coming to grips with reforms like those and leaving for the gallery all other expenditures which are little more than drops of water in an administrative reform whose first object is the interest of Canadians.

● (2140)

**Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette):** Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I take part in this opposition day resulting from a motion introduced by our party and which blames the government for certain extravagant expenditures and asks that an end be put to a certain waste.

I was quite impressed by the comments of the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont (Mr. Joyal). He pointed out the importance of very specific subjects. I was also very surprised to learn that ministers did not exercise strict control over certain expenditures. I think it is all to his credit to have said so in the House and that is what concerns me, that lack of control, those exaggerated expenditures, that waste.

A number of members dealt with various matters, such as wasteful spending. There was also reference to overly prolonged mismanagement, maladministration, and inadequate policies falling short of objectives. I recall the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) mentioned earlier this week the wrong direction taken by the Unemployment Insurance Commission and badly prepared fore-