

● (2200)

Main estimates for this ministry are higher in 1976-77 mainly because of the requirement for increased payments under the oil price subsidy program.

Well, looking at the estimates at page 5-4 I see that spending under the oil price subsidy program will, in fact, decrease by the amount of \$250 million between the fiscal years 1975-76 and 1976-77. I realize that detailed questions regarding the nature of these expenses ought to be put to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in committee, and I intend to do that. But this booklet, "How Your Tax Dollar is Spent" was not referred to the committee. In the words of the President of the Treasury Board in his introduction, the booklet was designed to be—

of considerable use to taxpayers and members of the House of Commons and the Senate because of the way it summarizes the voluminous details of the Blue Book, and because of additional information provided to show the economic context in which the government planned its expenditures.

Surely that is the case only if the information contained in the book is correct. A casual look at the estimates with regard to the statement to which I referred earlier shows that it is clearly not correct.

On February 12, Mr. Speaker, this house spent a day debating a motion put forward by my hon. friend from Halifax-East Hants dealing with the question of freedom of information. During the rather high level debate which took place that day members on both sides agreed there was a need for more and better information to be supplied by the government, in particular in connection with spending programs.

In his contribution to the debate the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) said the government was in fact providing more information. He gave us an example. He said that much more information was being provided by way of white papers and documents prepared to support the budget. He might have talked about this document, "How Your Tax Dollar is Spent". It is a relatively new edition to the procedure when tabling estimates. Anyway, this, we were told, was an example of the way the government was moving, and it is a desirable direction. But it must be acknowledged that there are statements here which are exactly contrary to the facts, as one is able to glean them from that awfully complicated document, the Blue Book of main estimates.

I do not intend to rehash old pleas about the necessity of better information, particularly for members of the House of Commons. This is so obvious that it should not require any elaboration. It is necessary for the functioning of our system that there should be less secrecy and more openness about spending.

The President of the Treasury Board has been moved to tell the House how difficult it is to curtail government spending. Well, Mr. Speaker, the C. D. Howe Research Institute gave some excellent advice when it stated that the first place the government should start in its program of restraint was by providing the public with better information as to how money was being spent and the problems the government was encountering in trying to hold down growth in government spending. Part of that is a requirement for more openness and honesty.

Adjournment Debate

This might be an honest mistake in the document, it might not. As I read the document it is less information about how your tax dollars are spent and more of an apologia for the government's inability to control government spending along the lines that were promised the Canadian people in the budget and many times since.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the booklet to which the hon. member refers, entitled "How Your Tax Dollar is Spent", provides comparisons between budgets printed in the Blue Books of main estimates of two consecutive years. In this case, the 1965-76 Blue Book displayed oil import compensation payments as \$1,300 million, and the 1976-77 Blue Book displays these payments as \$1,410 million.

Mr. Andre: What book are you reading?

Mr. Francis: When the hon. member reads my statement I think he will understand what I am saying. I just ask him to hear me out; I think it will be self-explanatory. Therefore, comparison of these figures identifies an increase of \$110 million, as the hon. member pointed out.

However, the amount printed in the 1975-76 Blue Book was supplemented during the course of the fiscal year by \$385 million, bringing the total program up to \$1,685 million. This was displayed in supplementary estimates "A" of this year and is displayed as total 1975-76 program cost in the 1976-77 Blue Book. It is because of that supplementary estimate that the program, as it appears in next year's Blue Book, shows a decrease of \$275 million. The hon. member is perfectly right in calling attention to the difficulty of getting documents printed on a basis that includes the latest information, including supplementary estimates tabled in the House. That is the explanation of the particular discrepancy to which he points.

RESEARCH—SUGGESTED RECONSIDERATION OF FREEZE ON FUNDS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): On January 27, Mr. Speaker, I asked the Acting Prime Minister whether in view of protests that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the minister of state in charge of science and technology and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) were receiving from all sectors of the scientific community regarding the virtual freeze on research funds provided to universities, the government would reconsider its position. The Acting Prime Minister replied that there would be no change.

I have refrained until now from pursuing the question further because I hoped that the protests, which I knew were continuing to flow into the Prime Minister's office, might give the Prime Minister some understanding of the horror which the government's freeze has created for the scientific community.

Let me put on the record some of the comments that have been made. The President of the National Research Council, Dr. W. G. Schneider, said among other things:

Canada will not be able to hold its own in the international market for new and improved manufactured products in a few years time because of these research cuts.