

The government is asking us for a blank cheque for \$12 billion yet, according to the fundamental philosophy under which this Parliament works, we are expected to undertake continuous scrutiny. How can we scrutinize something about which we do not know? Page 371 of the Lambert report says:

The key to Parliament's role as a body to which accountability is owed for the administration of government has always been the need for Parliament's approval of government expenditure and its power to review that expenditure.

How are we ever going to be able to review that expenditure if we do not know on what it is the \$12 billion is to be expended? That is the conundrum here. The government has only to explain the \$12 billion. It has not even told us how much of the previous borrowing authority it failed to use. Under the Lambert report in January of this year a special adviser was appointed to advise the government on what action it should take within one year of each of the commission's recommendations.

Mr. Evans: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the hon. member that in fact his question about how much borrowing authority since March 31, 1980, and prior to March 31, 1980, had been used can be found on the record in *Hansard*, if the hon. member will just look for it.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): I would like to take another extract from the Lambert report, and that is recommendation No. 21.2:

—there be established a committee of the House of Commons to be known as the Standing Committee on Government Finance and the Economy, that the annual fiscal plan presented to Parliament be automatically and permanently referred to this committee, that the committee report to the House on its study of the plan, and, that the government respond formally to the committee's report during a subsequent debate.

To my knowledge, this government has not taken any steps whatever to implement that very important recommendation and establish a committee on government finance and the economy. Nor has it presented an annual fiscal plan. It presented part of a plan in a statement on motions but refuses to produce its full plan. This is the problem which this Parliament faces.

I address through you, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) directly and say that he should know that this Parliament cannot willingly, without the imposition of this closure rule, approve a blank cheque for \$12 billion for a government which refuses to account for its expenditures, and we on this side of the House will not approve it. Using standards of domestic husbandry, it is evident that patterns of regular deficits signify bad management. When those regular deficits are taken in a governmental context and on a national basis—and not only are they regular deficits, but regularly mounting deficits—then there is cause for concern and alarm.

A former president of the Treasury Board appeared at a meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which was brought together to discuss the problems of parliamentary scrutiny over public finance and to suggest ways of

Time Allocation for Bill C-30

altering the balance between the legislature and the executive. Mr. Robert Andras was the Canadian spokesman at that particular meeting. One has cause for great concern because it was he while president of the Treasury Board who saw these deficits mount. They have mounted to such a degree that we are now faced with a net debt—and I hesitate to use the figure because it verges on meaningless—of \$55.8 billion in 1979.

The net debt per capita of this country is almost \$2,400. Every man, woman and child in this country owes and will have to meet a debt charge of, to be exact, \$2,360 in 1979. This is the matter which causes us such grave concern and alarm, and I refer not only to this Parliament but to the people of Canada.

Mr. Roger Simmons (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I believe we had one of the more amusing periods in this House this afternoon when the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) quite openly embraced the views which had been expressed by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie).

I could not help but reflect back to one of my very first days, indeed my third day, in this particular chamber, when we were involved in another debate such as this one on exactly the same kind of motion under Standing Order 75C. On that particular day the positions were reversed in that it was the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre who spoke and who was followed by the hon. member for St. John's West, if hon. members would check *Hansard*. On that day they were talking about the same kind of motion and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, to his credit, took exactly the same position as he took today, with one added touch. Today he was able to embrace the views of the hon. member for St. John's West. When the speaking positions were reversed, the result was somewhat different. Then the hon. member for St. John's West was in a position to comment on what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said. The hon. member for St. John's West said it was a lot of trash and nonsense.

• (1640)

Mr. Knowles: Now I know I was right.

Mr. Simmons: Now the hon. member should know that he was right. It was not he but the hon. member for St. John's West who changed gears on this one. What the hon. member for St. John's West embraces in June of 1980 he thought then was a lot of trash. That sums up the ludicrous position taken by the Tories in this debate this afternoon. I have never heard such blatant hypocrisy as that expressed on this bill this afternoon.

We heard this afternoon from the hon. member for St. John's West. "Old Leather Lungs" himself was bellowing forth about how this was the worst thing that had ever happened in this House. But five or six months ago he sat here