

Auditor General

American colonies. Domestically, the country was in disarray, with inflation and unemployment, with over-expenditure and extravagance, with waste and corruption. All those things took place under a government which had all the power in the world to do things about the situation, just as we have a government with the same power today.

I wish I had the time to put on the record some of the things said at that time in the House. After considerable research—I went back to 1780—I found that the mover of the resolution, Mr. Dunning, made the point that on that day a large number of petitions were brought to the House of Commons protesting against the situation which existed in the country. In the words of Mr. Dunning:

That day was destined, by a previous order, to the taking into consideration the petitions of the people of England; amounting to about forty in number; and conveying their sentiments and names in such an immense quantity of parchment, as seemed rather calculated to bury than to cover the speaker's table.

Mr. Dunning went on to say, as recorded in the *Annual Register*; they did not have *Hansard* at that time:

This was, the setting limits to the increased, dangerous, and unconstitutional influence of the Crown, and an economical expenditure of the public money.

It was a very good speech, and I just hope that hon. members who have some thought and care for the people of this country and for their constituents will read what was said 200 years ago and think of the shameful way—I use the word deliberately here—in which it is necessary for us in the House to remind the government and the people of Canada of the situation which faces us today and which parallels that of nearly 200 years ago. We thought that the powers of the progenitor or ancestor of this House were firmly fixed. We find that such was not the case.

It is also rather interesting to find that so important was the issue that at page 170 of the *Annual Register* of 1780 the following statement is to be found:

The speaker, on this day, took a decided part in support of the motion. He observed, that however irksome it was to him to take any part in their debates, and however cautious he was, and ought to be, of obtruding his own private opinions on the House, there were cases, and he considered the present as one of them, in which it would be criminal of him to remain silent. The question before them, he said, was of infinite consequence to that House.

Mr. Speaker went on to make a very good speech which I would recommend to hon. members on the government side. I am sure that if Madam Speaker or others in the chair were to see fit to adopt the sentiments of Mr. Speaker in those times, there would be no objection from this side of the House to their doing so. I point this out to call the attention of the House, through you, Madam Speaker, to a situation in which we find ourselves today, of being compelled to put before the House a motion of this kind in order to draw attention to the very dangerous condition in which we as parliament now find ourselves.

We have here a tacit alliance between the Liberals and the NDP. I heard my friend, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, applaud heartily a while ago the motion that was read, and I may well have to withdraw the statement which I am now making. If so, I will be glad to do so after I hear his speech. However, I have always been under the impression that both these parties believe in big government and in some measure of complete executive control between elections.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

This has completely undermined the parliamentary system and destroyed any meaningful opportunity for the taxpayer, the consumer and the voter to exercise influence through his elected representative. This is particularly the case when that executive is composed mainly of a small group of wilful and arrogant people, either former bureaucrats or those who suffer from the same social, political and intellectual liabilities in attempting to deal with modern problems. Their motto is simple: the state is ours and we do what we want with it.

• (1700)

If we look about us, total government spending is up to almost 40 per cent of the gross national product. That is all-government spending in Canada. The fact is that for this fiscal year the total spending of the federal government will probably settle somewhere between \$33 billion and \$35 billion after all loans, investments, advances and supplementary estimates are brought in. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) may be very optimistic about the limitations on the supplementary estimates he is going to bring in, but I have been around here a little longer than he has. I have watched this happen and I have no doubt at all that before this fiscal year is over total government spending will reach at least \$33 billion for all accounts.

Of this spending, approximately one-half is untouchable by this House. One-half is in the form of statutory estimates and it was held by Mr. Speaker in the last parliament that any attempt, in dealing with estimates in this House, to move to reduce them is not permissible. That is the ruling under which we are now operating. So the government can sit back complacently, knowing that some day in the month of June all of these estimates will be automatically passed. No matter what we want to do about them, there will be automatic approval and the ministers, deputy ministers and others, with the aid of their subservient majorities in the committees, can make a mockery of committees and set up all the roadblocks they wish to prevent the considered examination of estimates.

There is an energy crisis in this country, which is rich in energy but which is running 10 to 20 years behind schedule. There is a transportation mess, a lack of housing, high interest rates, problems in immigration and, of course, the black clouds of unemployment and inflation. Madam Speaker, despite the fact that this government holds very near dictatorial power, you name the problem and this country has it.

Before I go on to deal with the particular subject of the office of the Auditor General which concerns me to a very considerable extent—others of my hon. colleagues will deal with the question of the spending of the taxpayers' money, with the examination and scrutiny of the estimates in committee and in the House, with questions of secrecy and the refusal of the government to allow its civil servants to be cross-examined in committees—I would like to deal with a statement which to some extent is linked with what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said today in his statement.

I was intrigued by a statement attributed to the Prime Minister on his recent trip to Europe when he went over there to play with his new toy, the so-called contractual