

Main Estimates

fact the government should help in assisting and should suffer some of the consequences.

Before the last election the Liberals were calling such steps unacceptable, regressive taxation. How quickly they seem to forget or how quickly we seem to forget the amazing similarities between Conservative and Liberal policies. As a Saskatchewan cabinet minister so eloquently put it some time ago, "the 1979 federal election indicated that the Canadian people gave away onions and got back garlic; after the 1980 election we have got the onions back again".

In spite of the failings in what the estimates say, there are even greater failings in what the estimates do not say. The Liberals have promised action to reduce regional disparities, but nowhere do we see a real commitment to that in the comments made by the President of the Treasury Board this afternoon.

None of us must forget that this is a party and a government that voted last December to defeat the previous government because of a budget that did not stimulate the economy, lower taxes for Canadians and which did nothing about gaining control of the economy.

● (1630)

The estimates before us are a sort of cyclical document, I would think. After I have had a chance to look at them I believe they will show us once again that the Liberals are more interested in keeping power than in keeping their promises to the Canadian people. It seems they were not very responsive in the activities in this House over the past couple of days because of what they call the lack of federal representation in the Liberal caucus. With the possible loss of even more Liberal representation, they are certainly not being responsive to other members in this House.

As a new member of Parliament I had hoped the Liberal government would be responsive to the needs of Canadians in all areas of this country through the democratic process as indicated by what is in the throne speech. What has taken place over the last few days does not indicate any commitment to serve, in my opinion. As a result of public comment in my own constituency I had some praise for Liberals, their throne speech and their supposed response to other members of Parliament, but if this action over the last few days is any indication of what is happening, I regret ever having had any confidence in the Liberal party within Canada.

Mr. Stevens: Madam Speaker, I only wish the last speaker and his colleagues had sensed that lack of confidence in the Liberals during the last campaign.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Perhaps I could come back to my line of questioning of the President of the Treasury Board. Could he reconcile for the House the figure of \$58.4 billion in total expenditures as tabled today with the statement we were given last night, showing total expenditures for fiscal 1980-81 of

\$60.4 billion? Could he specifically reconcile the \$2 billion difference?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, I believe that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) spoke to this point last night, indicating that since the presentation of the budget in December and, of course, since the preparation of the main estimates which we inherited upon taking office, a number of events have taken place: an increase in public debt charges, for one; the increase in the international price of oil, which in turn increases the oil import compensation payments, to name but two of the major items; and the increase in the guaranteed income supplement which this government has committed itself to put into effect, which I believe was recorded as involving something in the order of \$345 million. These represent increases beyond the figure set forth in these main estimates of approximately \$58.4 billion. As you know, Madam Speaker, it is not unusual to table supplementary estimates, as I have done today, which take account of some parts of this increase over the numbers shown in the main estimates.

Mr. Stevens: Madam Speaker, perhaps we could look at these one at a time with the President of the Treasury Board. I think he owes it to the House to tell us exactly what accounts for the difference between the \$58.4 billion and the \$60.4 billion. Last night the minister indicated that the upward revision in public debt charges was of the order of \$500 million. Could the President of the Treasury Board tell us what is the upward adjustment on account of the oil compensation amount that is included presumably in this \$2 billion discrepancy or difference?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, I do not intend to analyze the full difference between the \$58.4 billion which has been tabled in the main estimates and in the supplementary estimates that I have tabled today, and the numbers put forward by the minister last night. He indicated at the time that they were simply projections. He also indicated at the time, as I recall, that he hoped this would be reduced through the establishment of this so-called blended oil price which we trust the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will, in due course, be able to agree upon. Pursuing an analysis of this kind at this time by the President of the Treasury Board and the hon. member for York-Peel I would regard as quite unproductive.

Mr. Anguish: I would address my question to the President of the Treasury Board, Madam Speaker. In his presentation this afternoon he said that an additional 5,840 person-year reduction would result in the public service of this country. Could he detail for us where we might expect those cuts to be found?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, I believe there has been some misunderstanding as to the statement I made. The indication was that 1979-80 was the second year of reduction. This reduction that these programs have given rise to in the current year I am advised is 5,840 person-years. If the hon.