

*Financial Administration*

wonders how still another committee is going to function during the course of this session. So many of them are already meeting—and just a few minutes ago we passed a motion that calls another to life—that I wonder when the committee on public accounts is going to get either the time or the staff to do this heavy, detailed and technical job. Nevertheless it is one that must be done, and I hope the committee can at least get started on it at this session.

When the Minister of Finance first introduced this measure last June 25, I felt that he was assessing the situation accurately when, as reported at page 4622 of *Hansard* of June 25, 1951, he spoke of the increased magnitude of government business and said:

Inevitably, in an enterprise of any magnitude, this involves some delegation of authority. However, the government's financial business must be carried on with full regard to the traditional relationships which exist under our parliamentary system of government between the legislature and the executive.

And he went on to say:

With the substantial increase in the amount of public business which comes before it, parliament can no longer deal, as it once did, with the details of administration. However, the government is the executant of the will of parliament, and must look there for its authority, and a broad measure of control and accountability is both necessary and proper.

I agree with those sentiments as expressed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott). There is no question but that the increasing magnitude of the business of government makes it impossible for members of parliament, in parliament assembled at any rate, to go into all the details in the manner that was characteristic of the parliament of Canada seventy-five or eighty years ago when relatively small amounts of money were being spent. That does mean we have to have machinery for the delegation of authority; but the more that becomes necessary, the more important it is that that machinery, and particularly the statutory provisions, is such as to retain the accountability of the government to parliament and the authority of parliament over the government, particularly with respect to the spending of money.

I should like to read one or two further sentences from what the minister said on that occasion. On the same page he said:

When authority has been granted to the executive a full measure of accountability has been assured.

This is the minister's characterization of the bill. I trust that will prove to be the case. He continues:

In short, the aim has been, by the proper delegation of authority, to achieve business efficiency in operations with full regard for the fundamental concepts of parliamentary sovereignty and executive responsibility.

[Mr. Knowles.]

As I have already said, I agree wholeheartedly with those precepts, and I trust that when the committee gets this bill and goes through it, clause by clause and line by line, they will keep those precepts in mind and make sure that this bill setting up anew our financial machinery, while it delegates authority to the executive, retains parliamentary control over that executive.

Even after that has been done, Mr. Speaker, even after the best possible bill has been drafted and reviewed and, perchance, revised and amended by a committee, it is still to be said that the control by parliament over the government, the responsibility of the government to parliament requires even something more than statutory provisions. It requires vigilance on the part of parliament. It means that members of parliament will have to work even harder at their job, after a measure like this goes through. It is our task to scrutinize wherever we possibly can. But it also means that the government will have to be most vigilant in recognizing its accountability to parliament; and it should keep that precept in mind at every stage, particularly with respect to any measures involving the expenditure of money.

I was interested the other day in the remarks of the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton), when he took up the whole question of governmental economy. We in this group feel that is something that must be watched, and that there must be every possible check against waste or extravagance in government expenditures. I confess we have not had a great deal to say on that subject, but when we see evidence of extravagance we strongly object. Our main concern has been rather with government policy in the financial field. We feel that the government should take the kind of steps financially which will facilitate the full functioning of our economy so that Canadians, and Canada as a whole, do not have to live in a penurious manner, but rather in keeping with the productive capacity that we possess.

I have just said that nevertheless we do feel that some very close and strict attention must be paid both by parliament as a whole and by the government to matters affecting economy. In this connection the parliamentary assistant will recall that last June I drew to his attention a system in vogue in the United States whereby government employees are encouraged to make suggestions to the various departments in which they are employed. I have in mind suggestions that result in economies or improvements in efficiency. I pointed out to the parliamentary assistant that certain awards are made to