

regularly and faithfully by the public servants the hon. member talks about.

Mr. Baldwin: I will simply say that the hon. member's comment establishes the fact that those who are victims of the principle of ministerial irresponsibility have gone up in number by 100 per cent in the last two minutes.

I should like now to give the House some background with respect to the measure before us—it is all related to the reason for my believing this is not good legislation. Political parties, in particular the government party, have engaged in the last few years in a form of competition for votes which has caused the expectations of the public to escalate to a stage which has overloaded our economy.

● (1512)

No better proof of that—and this directly relates to this bill and what powers could and should exist—is all the great programs, spending and otherwise, of the last 20 or 25 years. In each and every case those programs were brought in accompanied by statements as to their estimated cost and their public benefit which was either outright deception, gross exaggeration or negligence.

Examine today the cost of those programs. They have been exceeded to such an extent that, like a power plant, our economy has become overloaded. I do not say anything of the value of the programs, but it may be that if their true cost had been indicated at the time, this House and the public of Canada might well have said that they were good programs and, despite the cost, we would accept them.

These programs have been augmented one after another. The result is that today, with the electorate having been persuaded they will benefit to a point the economy is incapable of attaining, they have never been told there are limits on the capacity of the government to control economic forces. Now it has become crystal clear that the aggregate of all the good things promised cannot be delivered without penalties: inflation, unemployment, deficit balance of payments and the sagging dollar. This explains the outrage, anger and cynicism which exists all over this country.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) admitted this at a very interesting event, known as the great Liberal party, which was held here. I attach the "great" to the party. The Prime Minister admitted there was a lack of confidence and attempted to talk it down. This government cannot talk it down. They are not the solution, they are the problem; there is no question about it.

I do not care what wise decisions are made, whether it be to bring in a comptroller general with proper powers or to bring in programs to deal with inflation and unemployment, the public will not accept them because they do not believe what this government has to say. That is the problem. If you do not trust the doctor, you will not take the medicine.

When you look at the tens of millions of individual decisions and thousands of corporate decisions which have to be made, you see they have to be made by people who will take steps to

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restore the economy. The economy will never be stimulated by a government of this kind with its record stretching behind it. It will be stimulated and we will make progress when the public once more believes in the processes of democratic government and in the reforms and proposals the government will make. Thank heavens we are coming close to an interesting period in our history following which that will be the case.

One problem area has been the issue of over-spending. I was chairman of the public accounts committee 15 years ago and we went through the same difficulty then. However, it has now been compounded because we are into the \$50 billion bracket. Therefore, the mistakes, tragic errors and misjudgment of spending are exaggerated to the point where they create crises of confidence and crises of expenditure. This government does not have either the credit or the funds to do the job that needs to be done because of the facts I have stated.

After looking at reports of the Auditor General over the past 15 or 16 years, and even earlier if necessary, how can the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) expect us to believe that a statute of this kind will be effective to bring this under some form of control? There is just one way to control it, and that is to restore to this place the power and the authority it needs to challenge and scrutinize government expenditures. That means there ought to be backbenchers with intestinal fortitude and backbenchers with backbone on the other side who will stand up for the same things in which we believe.

I hope that when they go back and seek to persuade their electors that they should be returned to this House they will be prepared to answer the very pertinent and central question which goes to the core of our difficulties, namely: Why did you sit idly by and allow this government to get away with what it did? I am not talking about incompetence and matters on the periphery but about the basic issue of this government believing that it can spend and tax as though saving had gone out of fashion. That is the problem we face. This legislation will not cure it. It could be an ancillary or auxiliary aid for something else.

I have said this, members on this side have said it, our leader has said it and our previous leader has said it, and it has been part of our platform: Restore to this House the realistic right to challenge government. Make it come before us and our committees with full opportunity to challenge, scrutinize and examine, thus making them justify what they are doing. The right to govern is a trust. Like every trust there must be an accounting. There is no longer any accounting by government to this House for the expenditure of its funds.

Therefore, I am unhappy. I do not like this bill. I certainly will not vote for it. It could be all right if we knew what the powers would be and if it were accompanied by a real desire by the public of Canada to have restored to them, through this House, the right to make any government justify their expenditures, making them show what it has spent in the past and what it will spend in the future. That has been the purpose of parliament since the time of Simon de Montfort—the right of the public not to grant supply until all wrongs have been