

ability to legislate taxes or spending. That is done entirely by the executive branch. Again, it is a sham perpetrated on the people of Canada to claim that parliament collects taxes and controls government spending.

Apologists for this system from amongst the government say that the check here is ministerial responsibility. That is the phrase they love to use when they are defending the system they operate under. What does it mean, Mr. Speaker? According to the Oxford Dictionary "responsible" means "liable to be called to account, answerable, morally accountable for actions." How can the House of Commons call a minister to account? How can we exercise this ministerial responsibility?

When the Minister of Finance was president of the treasury board in February, 1975, and tabled the main estimates for the coming fiscal year, he said that spending for the following year was going to be \$28.2 billion in budgetary terms and \$1.3 billion in loans for a total of \$29.5 billion, representing a very modest 15 per cent increase over the previous year. He said he and his colleague the then minister of finance, the current Bay Street buccaneer were going to keep things to 15 per cent.

Let us examine what happened, Mr. Speaker. In reality, spending for that year was not \$29.5 billion, it was \$38.2 billion. The increase was not 15 per cent but 21 per cent. The Minister of Finance, who was then President of the Treasury Board, misled this House and the people of Canada about the government's spending plans. He was the responsible minister, but did he resign? He is still here. Did he apologize? Did he in any way account for this? Was he held responsible for this gross inaccuracy that he perpetrated on this House and the people of Canada? He was not. He is now perpetrating the same type of gross inaccuracies regarding some other aspects of government activities—unemployment, spending, debt and numerous other things.

Under this government ministerial responsibility is a sham. It is a shroud behind which they hide. It is a fraud. The Auditor General fills his report every year with instances of misspending by this government of illegal, improper activities. But has any minister resigned? Has one of them apologized? Has any responsibility been taken by ministers? Has the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) accepted responsibility for the AECL kaffuffle and all the abuses that occurred there? Not on your life, Mr. Speaker. It is absurd to suggest that we have a system of ministerial responsibility in this country. We have no such thing.

The second line of defence of the apologists of the current system is that, through the debates in the House, through bills, through things like the blue book, the public is given information, and through that there is a weight of public opinion to keep the government and ministers responsible. Again, that is a sham. We have no freedom of information act in this country. The information we obtain is that which the government gives us, no other. We do not know, so we cannot ask the right questions. Even when we do ask the right questions we are not assured that we are getting the right answers. Mr. Gordon Robertson, the second highest bureaucrat of this government, when talking about freedom of information said it is

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just agitation by vested interests, such as members of parliament and journalists. That was his reaction to our requests for information.

There is outright deception in the form of presentation of data, Mr. Speaker. Let us take the estimates which were presented less than a month ago by the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Andras), as an example. I shall outline four ways in which the method of presentation by the government deceives the House of Commons and the people of Canada about their spending plans.

When dealing with non-budgetary expenditure—loans and advances—they subtract low repayments. Thus, if last year one agency was given a loan of \$500 million, and another agency repaid a loan of like amount, the net effect on the spending estimates presented to parliament would be zero. There would be no effect. If this year that loan of \$500 million was written off, as is frequently the case with this government, that \$500 million would not show up either because that is a no-cash transfer system situation. It does not show up in the figures. The people of Canada would end up spending \$500 million of tax moneys and the President of the Treasury Board would not reflect that expenditure in the figures he gives to the House of Commons and the people of Canada. Therefore, we are deceived again about government spending plans.

This year for the first time some Crown corporation loans were not included in government loans. Whereas last year the Export Development Corporation received loans from the government of Canada of \$400 million, in the coming fiscal year they will make a loan directly from the private sector. Government spending for the following year is thereby reduced by this \$400 million to the Export Development Corporation, but there has been no change in terms of the loan. The people of Canada are still responsible for that loan. It is no different from the previous year, yet the numbers we get from the President of the Treasury Board say that they are spending \$400 million less in that way. That is a sham. It is a charade. It is dishonest.

Then we have a situation where the minister predicts future supplementary estimates through the year. Last year he predicted supplementary estimates of \$1,800 million. They turned out to be \$3 billion. Did the minister apologize? Did he retract? Did he correct that? Did he explain why there was such a difference between his prediction and fact? Not on your life, Mr. Speaker. That is what ministerial responsibility means.

He also predicted that certain funds would not be spent, that they would lapse. He predicted for this year that there would be \$1 billion lapsing, which is larger than any other year. If one were using historic precedents the amount of lapse would be about \$600 million, not \$1 billion as predicted by the Minister of Finance.

There is one other thing the government has been doing to hide true spending, and that is to push expenses off to the private sector. In the pipeline bill there is provision for a monitoring agency which is to cost around \$200 million. That is not to be paid by the government but by the pipeline