

Alleged Loss of Control of Public Moneys

section 20 but section 25 of the act which prohibits these moneys from being carried over from one year to the next.

My understanding of the law is that parliament is supreme, and that a specific act of parliament takes precedence over a general act of parliament. Upon that basis, I would like to review some of the specific observations that have been made. For example, vote L55 for the CBC is described as "Loans on terms and conditions approved by the Governor in council to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in the current and subsequent fiscal years for capital expenditures." A sum of \$25 million is provided. This vote, approved by Parliament, rightly or wrongly, is an expenditure which could in fact by law be carried over to some subsequent year. If parliament has made a mistake, it is parliament's responsibility to say so, and correct it if it so chooses. However I do not find it—and I say this with all respect—within the purview of the Auditor General of Canada to say, as in effect he is saying, that parliament has made a mistake in approving that kind of estimate. If it did make a mistake this type of reflection on parliament should come from parliamentarians themselves.

The same thing applies to other estimates to which reference has been made, and so far as I know to all the estimates referred to in connection with the carrying over of expenditures. For instance vote L25 for the Canadian International Development Agency in the sum of \$150 million clearly spells out that this money is for use in the current and subsequent fiscal years. Again, it is clear that parliament agreed to that particular approach. We can hardly blame the executive for acting upon the approval that was given to it by parliament itself.

The same is true, and in a more glaring way, with respect to vote 75 in the estimates of the Department of Transport. This is also cited in the Auditor General's report when he refers to money granted to the National Harbours Board. The vote here of \$1,200,000 clearly indicates that this is the amount to be credited to the National Harbours Board special account, and is to constitute an absolute grant without interest. One can hardly blame the National Harbours Board for treating it as a grant when it clearly was a grant, and I presume if it was a grant that it was one without strings attached. One can hardly blame the executive for treating it as parliament said it should be treated.

• (1500)

One could go on and on. Vote No. 5 was discussed at length in the Public Accounts Committee because it is a provision whereby the Treasury Board sets aside moneys to look after retroactive pay increases that may be granted as a result of the unionization of public employees. This money is granted on an annual basis and carries with it, according to the vote, the right to carry that fund over for payment as a charge in the year in which it is granted. That is quite clear as far as the wording of the estimates are concerned.

On a number of occasions in the Public Accounts Committee I have stated that it may well be that Parliament does not know what it is doing, but one can hardly blame the executive for the stupidity of people in this House who

[Mr. Cafik.]

now complain that we are doing what they authorized us to do. I do not know that it is the function of the Auditor General or anyone else to take members of this House by the hand and walk them through the estimates saying, "Gentlemen, you ought to know what you are doing before you vote." Clearly members ought to study these matters beforehand. It seems to me that the opposition might be able to tap some of the resource facilities given by this government in order to look into these matters in depth and express their objections, if they have any, at the time the estimates are discussed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cafik: It is clear that there is no act of illegality whatsoever. It is suggested that there is some violation of our constitution and that in some way we are circumventing the legal safeguards, but no one has bothered to point out what those legal safeguards are. If I were a member of the opposition involved drafting this particular motion—

An hon. Member: You will be.

Mr. Cafik: —I think I would pull out something a little more substantial. If you need any help, just let me know.

Mr. Paproski: Just look after the Pickering Airport.

Mr. Cafik: I should like to make a few general observations—

An hon. Member: The people in Pickering like you.

Mr. Penner: If you had more members like him in the opposition, you would be better off.

An hon. Member: He will be over here in the opposition next time.

Mr. Cafik: I had an opportunity to be in the opposition when I was invited by some members of that party, but using my usual good sense I declined.

I should like to underline the position that I have taken in the four years that I have been a Member of Parliament. I have always been a very strong advocate of the importance of the office of Auditor General of Canada. I concur with all members of this House who express this sentiment, whatever their party affiliation. I think it is unfortunate that so many of our provincial governments do not follow the lead of the federal government in having an Auditor General look after the public purse and draw important matters to their attention. I suggest that the Conservative party which introduced this motion might exercise some influence with provincial governments controlled by their party to see that this is done.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cafik: I should like to comment on another matter raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) today. I am sorry that he is not in the House but as happens on other occasions when we discuss the Auditor General, we find that he is very interested but noticeably absent. That is certainly the case in the Public Accounts Committee where he professes to know so much about it by remote control.