

*Financial Administration Act*

critical importance to Canadians and the workings of parliament at this time?

I believe Canadians will turf out this government and call upon the Progressive Conservative party and its leader to form the new government. We want the position of Comptroller General to be a position of authority, not simply a position of name. One of the deficiencies of this bill is the fact that it does not clearly set out the responsibilities.

In paragraph 2.15 of the 1976 report of the Auditor General, he clearly outlines what the responsibilities of the Comptroller General should be. On one hand, the government indicates it is following the recommendations of the Auditor General by creating the position of Comptroller General to somehow bring uncontrolled spending under control. Yet, his recommendations are accepted without putting teeth into the act as recommended by the Auditor General. One cannot have it both ways. Either what he says is accepted, or it is not. It is incredible that the government comes before parliament asking for support of a bill which is inconsistent with the recommendations of the Auditor General.

If hon. members opposite want to continue to defend this toothless bill, I ask them to look at paragraph 2.15 of the report, wherein the duties of the Comptroller General are spelled out clearly. The position of Comptroller General should be accountable to parliament, and his appointment should be referred to an appropriate standing committee. As was recommended by the Auditor General, he ought to be more than simply a deputy minister. His responsibilities must be clearly laid out.

I confess I do not know Mr. Harry Rogers; I understand he will be taking this position. I understand he is a man of some notable ability and credibility. I am looking forward to the expertise he will bring into this position. He comes to this position with the required enthusiasm and dedication. With the legacy of spending and the track record of this government, it is unfair for parliament to ask any man to take a position without legislation clearly spelling out his authority. I cannot emphasize enough the fact the Auditor General made specific recommendations as to what the responsibilities of that position should be. But this bill contains no specific responsibilities.

Quite frankly, I do not understand how government members can accept the Auditor General's suggestion to create this position and at the same time not support our amendments which were based on what the Auditor General suggested. I have the report in my hand, but I will not read it. It is well known to the government. I plead with the government to accept the amendments which stand in the name of the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre). As I have indicated before, the Auditor General suggested the establishment of the position of Comptroller General.

**Mr. Francis:** But he did not indicate that it should be spelled out in the statute.

**Mr. Whiteway:** Perhaps the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) missed my earlier remarks wherein I referred to

[Mr. Whiteway.]

paragraph 2.15 of the 1976 Auditor General's report. I stand on that. If we vote on this piece of legislation tonight, I appeal to government members to support our amendments. The legacy of spending of this government absolutely cries out for a responsible Comptroller General who will get government spending under control.

● (2122)

I am happy to say that when Mr. Harry Rogers takes that position it will only be a matter of months before the Progressive Conservative party under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) takes the reins of government, and we will help him do his job of getting government spending under control. We will make his job obsolete. Ministers in our government will make his job unnecessary. In the meantime, with the position this legislation will create, I would ask the government to support our amendments in order that we can follow the recommendation of the Attorney General by giving this legislation teeth and the position the responsibility it deserves.

**Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Mr. Speaker, one of the first things this government did when it took office ten years ago was to bring in major changes to the rules of the House. Those of us who were here at that time recall that debate very well. We remember that ironically those rule changes were put through by the invocation of closure.

It was the former auditor general in an article a few years ago who made the point that the take-off in government expenditures commenced at the time this government changed the rules of the House. What this government did to the House of Commons at that time was remove from this place parliament's ancient and traditional right to withhold or control supply and government expenditure.

There is not a member of this House who will not admit that the present system is just not working; it is not working in terms of an examination of the estimates and in terms of parliament having any control whatsoever of the government's purse strings. All we have to do is go to the standing committees of the House where the estimates are being examined. We will find in most cases, if not all, those standing committees which are now involved in what should be parliament's most important task, the scrutiny of government expenditures and holding the government accountable, cannot find a quorum. As a matter of fact, some of the committees cannot sit because there are not enough members there to go through the motion of hearing evidence.

My colleague says the fisheries committee this afternoon could not sit because there were not enough members. That committee was scheduled to sit today under the block system we now have by which a number of standing committees sit at the same time to examine the estimates. Members have lost interest. Interestingly enough, the press too have lost interest because this is a charade and a meaningless exercise.

Under the rules, which are no longer new, having been adopted in 1968, we took away from this place the right to