

Alleged Loss of Control of Public Moneys

aged people—while we cry out at this cataloguing of bungling and waste, that is not enough.

There are two other areas in regard to the revelations in the Auditor General's report which must be objected to in the highest degree. The first is the revelation which the report makes of the government's tendency, (a) to put special wording into the vote texts of appropriation acts, and (b) to record certain items as expenditures duly approved by parliament which were in fact funds retained for spending in subsequent years and which should have gone back to parliament for re-approval. Millions of dollars have been secured by the government in this way in the 1970-71 period. This strikes at parliament's right to represent the public in the outlay of the public's money. This must be stopped. We recommend that where any change occurs in the normal course of presentation of estimates, in the wording or standards which previously prevailed, a note or other indication calling attention to the variation be included in that particular item. That would be a guide to parliament rather than, as has sometimes been the case, a blind to parliament.

Again, Mr. Speaker, dealing with the millions of dollars that the government gets by contingency votes for supplementing the appropriations of the various departments, back in 1966 the Public Accounts Committee urged that any additional amounts required by each department must be made the subject of a supplementary estimate, prepared by the department concerned for submission to parliament. If that procedure were carried out, it would put an end to the evasion of parliamentary control of public funds by the building up of reserves through contingency votes.

A second serious thing about the report of the Auditor General is the effect of the disclosures of the inefficiency, sloth and wastefulness which are present in some departments of government. The effect of this will be to the discredit and disdain of our parliamentary system. I wonder what the farmer, the logger, the fisherman, the plant or office worker, or the old age pensioner must think of parliament after this catalogue of waste. I wonder what the country must think of parliament, never mind what it thinks about the government, after reading the Auditor General's detailed, yet limited because of staff problems, report. It seems to me that the disclosures by the Auditor General strike at the root of the public's faith in their elected representatives. I believe that this House, the Public Accounts Committee, and particularly the government should put an end to the kind of thing which is exposed by the Auditor General. If we do not do so we will in effect be guilty of undermining the parliamentary system.

In the view of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, all hon. members of this House should be united in their concern over the waste that the Auditor General exposes, and in many cases exposes every year without result. We should see to it that more power is given to the Auditor General, and that his staff is not handicapped, but indeed enlarged and upgraded, to find out and eliminate the inefficiency and waste which are tabulated in his report. We in the New Democratic Party are not content to exclaim over the scores of detailed items of non-productive

expenditures as tabulated by the Auditor General. We are all for attacking them, and we do so in and out of committee, but that is not enough. I think we need to do two more things if the war on waste at the Ottawa level is to be won.

We need to follow up and follow through on the Auditor General's recommendations against leaks in public funds. His report states that of the 41 recommendations which had not been implemented or otherwise dealt with at March 31, 1970, 31 still remain. Seven additional recommendations are capable of specific implementation, but have not yet been implemented even though they were made by the Public Accounts Committee. The House should concern itself more than has been the case in pressing the government to expedite the implementation of the anti-waste recommendations of the Auditor General and of the Public Accounts Committee. We need to follow through to see that the leaks are blocked. But that too, important as it is, is not enough.

In my opinion we should press for a deep, broad and far-going survey, or inquiry or investigation of the system of the government's ways of doing business. It is not sufficient for us to examine the fruits of the system, not enough to take up individual results of a basic and continuing fault. We must get to the root as well as to the fruit of federal incompetence. I believe that the Auditor General himself made a rather similar proposal. In the Public Accounts Committee we read from year to year his reports of individual instances of bungling, but from year to year the same stream of dereliction continues to flow. I urge, in addition to the motion before us, that parliament either through the Public Accounts Committee, or perhaps through a select committee, should probe into the depths of the iceberg, the tip alone of which shows itself in the Auditor General's report. We should probe into this faulty system. Let us examine and correct the system, and not just complain about what it produces.

To sum up, Mr. Speaker, we of the NDP support the motion moved by the Official Opposition. We press for more power and freedom of action for the Auditor General, and we intend to make detailed representations on that point at the committee level. We seek practical safeguards to stop the government's tendency to evade parliament's scrutiny and understanding of its accounts. We ask for a determination by all hon. members to follow through and see to it that the anti-waste recommendations are implemented. Finally, we call for an in depth inquiry into the system that produces the on-going waste and bungling in the expenditure of public funds.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, the motion the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) moved today is most important because it deals with the report the Auditor General of Canada presents every year. Every time this report comes out, we note that he points out innumerable costly errors for which civil servants are responsible.

Every year the Auditor General presents a report which, to my mind, is revolting. If the Canadian public were to read it, I believe a revolt would break out in

[Mr. Mather.]