

Main Estimates

process of stealing the program and platform, plank by plank, of the Conservative party. They are taking this country back to the economic policies of Herbert Hoover and R. B. Bennett. The results of that policy will have the same effect as similar policies had in the 1930s, and the present recession may well turn into a full-fledged depression.

The minister is proud of the number of jobs the government has created. I would like to conclude by reminding the minister that, according to official figures issued by Statistics Canada, some 977,000 people were unemployed last month. This figure amounts to 8.1 per cent of the labour force. We know that there were probably another 250,000 people who were looking for work but who were not counted. If the government continues its present policies of restraint coupled with its failure to come up with an industrial strategy which will put our people to work, a year from now we will not have 8.1 per cent unemployment but probably 9 per cent to 9.5 per cent of the labour force will be unemployed. Instead of 977,000 people unemployed there will probably be 1,250,000 people unemployed. That is what the government's restraint program means, and we think that the government is dead wrong.

● (1550)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Janelle (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, my comments will be very brief and for the same reasons put forward by the hon. members for the Progressive Conservative party and the New Democratic Party. Not having received this documentation and not knowing exactly what it contains, we would rather hold our comments until later and we will study these estimates very closely.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): To follow the comments of the hon. member who has just spoken, I will simply say that I find myself in the same situation. I did not receive the documents but that does not prevent me from speaking, for I have something I want to tell the House.

[English]

The form of the estimates about which the minister said a few words has been a matter of discussion at some length by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts of which I have the honour of being the vice-chairman. The minister in his statement today has indicated—

Mr. Alexander: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I thought the usual procedure was that the minister delivered a statement, the official opposition replied, then the New Democratic Party had an opportunity to reply and finally the Social Credit party. I did not think there was any room at this time for a backbencher on the government side to deliver a speech. I figure that this is the time when we have the opportunity to ask questions. It usually happens when the minister has completed his speech and, therefore—

Mr. Francis: Does the hon. member want to deprive me of my rights in this House of Commons?

[Mr. Orlikow.]

Mr. Alexander: On that point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to deprive the hon. member of anything whatsoever. I am trying to tell him, through you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a certain sequence of events which takes place. I should like to have the opportunity of asking the minister the first question. I noticed that the minister—

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, I think the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) had the floor. May I refer you to Standing Order 15(3) which reads as follows:

—a minister of the Crown may make a short factual announcement or statement of government policy. A spokesman for each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly thereon and members may be permitted to address questions thereon to the minister.

An hon. Member: That is right, questions.

Mr. Pinard: I have not finished.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): In my opinion the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) was going to ask a question. That is why I recognized him.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, I have had the honour of serving as vice-chairman of the public accounts committee—

Mr. Andre: Question.

Mr. Francis: Hon. members on the other side are very quick if we on this side try to cut them down. Do they not give me the same rights as they demand for themselves? Are they not prepared to say the rules are the same for all hon. members?

Mr. Andre: Ask a question.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question of the minister but I do have a preamble. In view of the problems in connection with the format of the estimates—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Francis: I shall take my time, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure I have the right to do. The problems have been considered at some length, not only by the Auditor General in his various reports but also by members of the public accounts committee. In view of the models which had been developed, not only for government departments but for Crown corporations, in order to render the estimates in a form which is more comprehensible to hon. members, I venture to suggest there is not a single hon. member in this place who will read every word in these documents. Very few of them have an opportunity of using the information in a way that is helpful.

My question to the minister is this: Just when does he feel it will be possible to make a more detailed statement concerning the format of the estimates following the suggestions of the Auditor General and the committee in order that they could be put in a more useful format for hon. members of this House?

Mr. Buchanan: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated during the course of my remarks, I hope I will be able to do that later this