

*Committee on Estimates*

statement that he shared that opinion to a great extent, which felt that the committee of the whole house, which in this case would be the committee of supply, could not effectively check the growing tendency towards increased expenditure.

He complained, as I suppose his counterpart here, the Minister of Finance and his predecessors and successors will always complain, that the great preponderance of the pressure he gets from hon. members of parliament is for increased expenditure rather than the reverse.

The chancellor told a moving story of the difficulty that confronted him in any endeavour not only to reduce expenditures but to even prevent them from growing beyond all reasonable bounds, and he said in effect that really he was not unduly critical of hon. members for that tendency because, as he said, they come to parliament with individual needs, cases arising in their constituencies which they feel they must put forward, or the necessity of individual groups within the framework of the national economy, and it is natural and proper that they should press those needs; but the result was that there was an over-all pressure in the direction of increased expenditure and that really the only body which regarded itself as the watchdog, and the only body which ever came anywhere near exercising a tendency in the opposite direction, was the treasury, which in Canada we call the treasury board. I think I have heard the Minister of Finance argue somewhat along the same lines in this house.

The committee of supply is a committee of the whole house and thus a committee of a large number of hon. members where it is difficult to come to grips with details and perhaps it is inefficient to come to grips with details because it means that every hon. member who engages in a discussion of any length with the minister on a matter of detail does so while 264 other hon. members are waiting until the individual discussion is concluded before any of the rest of the business can be proceeded with. For these reasons

it is possible that the committee is not a body where discussions of detail can be efficiently carried on as a general practice.

That sentiment was agreed to, I think, by most of the hon. members who spoke in the debate in the United Kingdom. Now, sir, I mentioned that at some length because I think it is important that we should keep before us the main function which this committee can and should serve, and that is to deal with details, to be a watchdog of expenditure, to be an agency by which the committee of supply can discharge the function which has perhaps rather slipped from its grasp over late years and which perhaps was inevitably bound to slip from its grasp by the nature of the complexity of the business with which parliament now deals. Therefore, if this committee is to perform this function of effective scrutiny and thereby increase the efficiency of departments and ensure that the people of this country get a dollar's value for every dollar that is spent, I submit it is absolutely essential that the committee should have the necessary powers to enable it to discharge that function.

I submit to you, sir, without any hesitation on the basis of our experience last year, that the committee as then constituted did not have those powers and that the committee as contemplated in the motion now standing in the name of the Prime Minister will not have the necessary powers to enable it to discharge its function unless the resolution is amended along the lines which we intend to offer in the course of this discussion.

If it suits the convenience of hon. member I should like you to call it ten o'clock.

On motion of Mr. Fulton the debate was adjourned.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Harris:** Mr. Speaker, we will take the estimates of the Department of Agriculture tomorrow.

At ten o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.