

The CHAIRMAN: That is a good point. We could have to take one particular department and go through its activities.

Senator LAMBERT: I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if sufficient attention has been paid to what has been described on page 6 of the report as the most significant of all the recommendations of the Glassco Commission. That commission recommended, for example, that there should be more decentralization, and more autonomy given to the spending departments of government. It seems to me that that recommendation met with some pretty definite questioning and cross-questioning of the representatives of the Department of Finance and the Treasury Board. I have doubts in my own mind about the advisability of approving completely of that recommendation.

The CHAIRMAN: We have not approved of it. Perhaps I should read this again. Our report says:

Your committee desires to sound a word of caution in connection with this recommendation.

Nowhere do we approve it. We then go on to say:

The change, of itself, will not automatically bring about the desired improvement. Its success will depend upon how the key personnel in the Civil Service respond to the challenge involved in this delegation of greater responsibility to them...

And then we say that there must be competent men to run the departments, and then we say:

It is to be hoped, but it still remains to be seen, that skilled and competent internal financial management within departments will bring about greater efficiency and savings.

Senator GROSART: This paragraph gives me some concern. I think the key phrase is in the first three lines of subparagraph (e)—that this refers only to the effective management of the financial resources placed at the disposal of the department. I am afraid that subparagraph (e), as it is written, might give the impression that we are approving of less control of overall expenditures, whereas that is not what we are doing at all. It is my understanding from the discussion that took place that the recommendation is that once sums were allotted to departments, the departments be relieved of the necessity of getting permission every time they want to spend moneys that have been approved. I do not think that is quite clear here.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you some suggested alternative wording?

Senator GROSART: This, I take it, is a paraphrase of the recommendation?

The CHAIRMAN: The first paragraph of (e) is the Glassco recommendation, and from there on the comments are those of the committee.

Senator GROSART: I think the public would not wish to see any diminution of the present checking and auditing and safeguards provided by the Comptroller of the Treasury and the Auditor General and others. However, Mr. Chairman, I think the report is an excellent one. This may be quibbling. I do not think it is essential that there be a change in it now.

The CHAIRMAN: The actual wording on page 99, and which we were endeavouring to quote, is:

We therefore recommend that:

1. Departments and agencies be given the necessary financial authority and be held accountable for the effective management of the financial resources placed at their disposal.

That is an exact quotation of the wording.