

Government Orders

admit candidly, much of it well deserved, but the system is far greater. Ask any woman or man who has sat in this place and who is now gone from this place. I think Pierre Elliott Trudeau put it very well: "Don't get too far off the Hill and you become a nobody. Perhaps when you are back in your constituency a few people may recognize you".

Ask the people who have passed through this place what they have contributed, how they have performed, how efficient they were, what kind of impact they had on policy. Many people are constituency politicians. There are all kinds of ways of assessing them. We go through an assessment, and we like to go through the assessment, I might point out, every four years. I am told that tradition will change and that we might have to wait five years. I will let Canadians address that question.

The cynicism and the frustration that is directed toward the system also includes, and we have to be honest about this, a feeling that the Public Service of Canada perhaps is not as efficient as it should be. There is the question of contracting out, all of the frustration that was generated, for example, during the strike. We all remember how people were responding to situations that had a direct affect on them. Other than that, perhaps people were relatively apathetic. However, when people were in lines, could not get into airports, could not get passports, could not get various programs approved or applications and so forth, there was a high degree of frustration.

We might think that is gone, but I think it is in the best interest of the Public Service to have a thorough look at what we are proposing. That is why I want to emphasize accountability. If we are going to be accountable as politicians and if we are going to pay the price every four or five years, whatever the case might be, that is one thing. In the Public Service there needs to be accountability. That is going to become very difficult if we look at how the proposals in this legislation allow for decision-making to take place. Are we going to have a more rapid response to problems? Are we going to deal at regional levels and even local levels with specific problems, or are we going to have a greater attempt to make sure that accountability is taken care of, in other words that we cover any decision we make very thoroughly to make sure no one is left out to swing in the wind. I think that is

a legitimate concern on the part of public servants, to find out what the decision-making process being proposed implies and what kind of responsibility will rest with the person making the decision.

The public servant has a stake in this, but the Canadian people also have a stake in it. Is it going to be more efficient or are we going to have more people trying to make certain that at some point in time they are not found to be responsible for an incorrect, improper decision or a decision that had very bad results?

These are the questions that I believe must be addressed because of the notion of accountability. The accountability aspect of everything we do now in public life is critical. We must understand that Canadians are insisting that politicians and public servants be accountable and that the system of accountability be as transparent as possible. The best example of that is in Public Accounts where people are far more concerned with the expenditure of \$100,000, \$200,000 or \$1 million than they are with the expenditure of a billion dollars, because the system confounds them when they look at the larger issue. They are unable to deal with it adequately.

I was told yesterday by an individual with whom I was discussing this problem that it is common currency in the senior levels of the Public Service to suggest that part III of the Estimates, for example, which deals with a lot of the details as to how money is spent in this country, is not being used by parliamentarians. There is a tremendous expense in generating this information. Departments work for weeks and months at putting together the information that flows through that process and eventually comes out in a series of books that would fill a counter 10 to 12 feet long. The sad fact is that that senior public servant is right. They are not being used.

Are they not being used because parliamentarians and the Canadian public do not want to use them, or are they so complex and difficult to deal with that no one has the expertise or very few people have the expertise to use them?

The question that will have to be asked at some point by parliamentarians is: Is the production of this information by the bureaucracy and by government designed to inform Parliament and the public, or is the exercise designed to fulfil the necessity for disclosure?