

Mr. Henderson: No. 50?

The Chairman: Yes, Mr. Henderson.

Mr. Henderson: This paragraph will remind members how we seek to watch Parliament's prerogative of authorizing expenditure. In the first paragraph we explain the prohibition contained in section 30 of the Financial Administration Act, namely, that:

No contract providing for the payment of any money by Her Majesty shall be entered into or have any force or effect unless the Comptroller certifies that there is a sufficient unencumbered balance available out of an appropriation... to discharge any commitments under such contract...

In this case when the Comptroller found that no funds were available to meet commitments under contracts proposed for the winter works projects because there was no appropriation available at the time, nor was there an item included in estimates before the House, he was directed by the Treasury Board to record such commitments on a provisional basis. This was a repetition of a similar situation in November of 1961 that I seem to recall having discussed before the Committee. Our criticism is that as federal winter works programs have been established regularly in each of the last nine years, they can hardly be considered as being required to meet an emergency as far as forward estimating is concerned. Therefore in our view, the entering into of such contracts under these circumstances is simply contrary to the provision of section 30 of the Financial Administration Act. I suppose we might add that it is largely a procedural point, but nevertheless it is a very important one in terms of our responsibility for safeguarding Parliament's prerogative. I therefore hope that the decision we took would commend itself to the members of the Committee.

The Chairman: Are there any questions on that item, gentlemen? Mr. Schreyer?

Mr. Schreyer: Mr. Chairman, the way Mr. Henderson puts it, I feel that he could be misunderstood. I take it you are not saying that winter works programs are not urgently needed...

Mr. Henderson: Oh, no.

Mr. Schreyer: ... but urgent as they are, because they have been put into effect year after year, they should be covered by forward estimating of the department?

Mr. Henderson: That is right. That is the principle there. Do you want to say something on this, Mr. Long?

Mr. Long: Mr. Schreyer, I want to avoid confusion with the winter works program, where the federal government shares work with provinces and municipalities. This item deals with the federal government's work on its buildings. This is not the larger over-all shared-cost winter works program.

Mr. Schreyer: Oh, I am sorry.

The Chairman: Gentlemen, I know you want to have a discussion about Thursday's meeting and how we will proceed with the great amount of work that is before us. I throw this out to you as a suggestion on the assumption and with the feeling that we just cannot set the 1966 Report aside and do nothing with it. It has been referred to us by the House and as a conscientious committee we must abide by the House's request. Mr. Henderson and Mr. Long have gone to considerable trouble to outline the paragraphs that we should spend time on.

How would it be if I divided this list, for instance down to number 70 and asked the first three men here, Mr. Neveu, Mr. Winch and Mr. Schreyer to go over those from 48 to 70—we have done the first two—and to be responsible for that section and come prepared Thursday to state to the Committee: "We have looked this over and we think everything is under control" or "We should study this, or do that". Then we could assign the next items, to number 91, to the next three men. Would this system work? In other words, there would be a little homework to be done by three fellows on a certain number of items.

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Mr. Leblanc (Laurier): It is not restricted to those three, is it?

The Chairman: Oh, no, Mr. Leblanc. Would that kind of system work out? I think it would. Are there any comments?

Mr. McLean (Charlotte): I think we all should look at it.

The Chairman: Mr. McLean, the idea was to designate three to concentrate on it.

Mr. McLean (Charlotte): That is fine with me.

The Chairman: But it is still wide open. All right. Draw a line under number 70 for the