

Public Reports

The third paragraph deals with the statement of cost and the purpose of the report. It reads as follows:

Every person making a report that is intended to be submitted to or laid before parliament or either of the Houses of Parliament shall include in the report under the imprint or catalogue number a statement of the purpose and cost of producing and publishing the report.

Also, this paragraph includes the definition of the word "person" as including a minister of the Crown, a commissioner appointed under the Inquiries Act, a Crown corporation, a department and a commission, board or tribunal. The fourth paragraph of this short bill deals with the criteria in determination of cost, and of course is simply an assurance that all costs in connection with the publication should be taken into account. It reads as follows:

For the purpose of determining the cost of producing and publishing a report, there shall be taken into account any special expenditure for additional salaries, equipment, materials or services made necessary for the formulation, composition, printing, publication and distribution of the report.

Persons issuing documents should know—and if they do not, they will be forced to find out—what moneys they are going to be spending in publishing a report. I would assume, if there is any kind of efficiency in any department, that those costs are known in advance, so that there are no additional costs in ascertaining what the figures are. The public should be aware of the cost of every document they receive. This short bill would attempt to make sure that the department is aware of what moneys they are spending; that they communicate that information to the public at large; and that the public will be aware of the amount of money that is being spent in communicating to them the various reports and forms of communication sent out by the various departments.

With those few explanatory remarks in mind, I hope hon. members will see fit to pass this bill on second reading.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Joe Flynn (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, the private member's bill proposed by the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) is, I am sure, based on noble intentions. As everyone is acutely aware, we are in a time of economic restraint throughout the government of Canada. The growth in the public service has been reduced to under 1 per cent, and the over-all man-year allotment for many departments and agencies of the federal government has been drastically reduced. This is an important part of our over-all economic policy. Coupled with the efforts of the Anti-Inflation Board, the Canadian government's personal austerity program is having a real effect on the economy. This bill proposes the following:

Every person making a report that is intended to be submitted to or laid before parliament or either of the Houses of Parliament shall include in the report under the imprint or catalogue number a statement of the purpose and cost of producing and publishing the report.

This is, by itself, not a great concern. However, the hon. member goes further, and again I quote directly from the bill which reads as follows:

For the purpose of determining the cost of producing and publishing a report, there shall be taken into account any special expenditure for additional salaries,

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equipment, materials or services made necessary for the formulation, composition, printing, publication and distribution of the report.

I shudder to think of the added cost that such a proposal, if enacted, would mean to the taxpayers of this nation. This bill is a far-reaching, more or less omnibus type of bill because it is meant to apply to every document, report or other like publication that is to be presented to either of the two chambers of this parliament. Surely it is easy to see that the sheer volume of annual reports, background papers, etc., which are brought before the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada will mean substantial expenditures above and beyond the real cost of publication, if this bill is made law. Not only will the taxpayers carry the production and publication costs, but also they will have to carry the cost of the additional staff required to carry out the mandate of this legislation.

There are in excess of several score of government agencies, boards, commissions, etc., as well as over 30 separate ministries in the federal government. In order that this legislation is to be fully enacted and implemented, the additional staff requirement of the public service will be in excess of several hundreds, possibly thousands, of people. With each person receiving a salary commensurate to the gravity of his or her duties, it is not inconceivable to foresee increased expenditures of several million dollars.

● (1712)

The hon. member for Vaudreuil wants the cost per copy to be calculated to include such items as equipment, materials and additional services that are the result of the publications production. It is important to note that this is to apply to every stage of production, from the cost of the original thought process involved in the publication's beginning to the final distribution cost at the end. Without doubt, Mr. Speaker, the criteria for determination of the cost of publishing reports, as outlined in this bill, will result in the expenditure of many more dollars than are likely to be lost due to faulty financial accounting in the publishing sections of the various federal government departments, agencies and other bodies.

It will come as no surprise to hon. members that within each department of the federal government, and on the staff of every board, agency, Crown corporation, commission and other like bodies, is a person or persons directly responsible for the proper administration and direction of government funds. The publication sections of all of these bodies are also subject to similar scrutiny. Certainly there can be no misunderstanding in this regard. The mechanisms are already in place to regulate and to ensure proper financial management. This bill will merely duplicate existing practices and procedures. I cannot see usefulness in duplication.

This bill is certainly too wide in scope and in intent. In the final analysis, it is not going to save the Canadian taxpayer any money, and it is very likely that, if enacted, it will add to the publication cost of the federal government, a cost which will be borne by the Canadian workingman, the Canadian taxpayer. It will also result in an inevitable increase in the number of public service employees. In short, Mr. Speaker,