

was supposed to come down from Alaska and the Mackenzie Delta to the lower 48 states.

We never built the pipeline but here we are in 1993, the Northern Pipeline Agency is still there and it is costing my constituents in Port Moody—Coquitlam and the other taxpayers in Canada \$469,000. Is the government really serious about cutting back or not? When I see things like a Northern Pipeline Agency which is a hold-over from some bygone era I wonder if it is really serious.

I do not expect the hon. member for Burlington to be able to identify one expenditure and have all the facts. He might have that but I do not know. What is the process of seriously cutting back programs that are extraneous and not cutting back the programs that really affect people?

Mr. Kempling: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question because when I was in the opposition I used to ask the same sort of question. I remember vividly when we closed down an agency that was established during World War I at the time of the Halifax explosion when a number of ammunition ships exploded. A number of people were killed and terrible damage was done.

I recall that our leader at the time was Mr. Stanfield. It was in the 1970s so from 1917 to 1973, I believe, this agency kept working. It had offices, personnel and letterhead. It submitted annual reports and finally it closed down. I think the member realizes that once we start something it is very difficult to close it down.

I remember when the Northern Pipeline Agency was established. I think I had some long talks with the Hon. Mitchell Sharp who headed the agency for a time. It served a purpose but like a lot of things it was hard to close down.

I guess every department of government has been clawed through by Treasury Board to see what changes could be made. We have closed down agencies and something in excess of 40 government departments as I recall, saving billions of dollars and we continue to do this. We have released about 12,000 public servants through attrition and the closing down of departments. We got rid of more than 20 Crown corporations and about 80,000 employees have ceased to be a liability of the government.

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On the other hand we have done many other things that we cannot cover in a short speech in the House of Commons. I ask the hon. member to reflect back on the pension legislation we passed a few months ago where we used to carry the government portion of pension liabilities as part of the national debt. All those pensions are now self-funding. The government puts its portion in, the employees put their portion in and those pension funds are now supervised by a board. That is an ongoing thing and over the years it will dramatically help us look after those pension accounts. It is something that should have been done years ago but it was not. Do not ask me why it was not done, it just was not done.

• (1600)

We have made tremendous progress in a few years against a spending estimate that is down now but has been very high, in the billions of dollars, over the past number of years. We are going to continue to do the very best we can.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I am just going to add one thing. It is a comment the member will appreciate perhaps in the spirit in which it is intended.

When I was a young member 14 years ago and came to the House, Tommy Douglas had just retired but he was around in the lobby and in the House. I asked him about the estimates once and he told me that all the estimates of all the departments would go through the whole House.

He said he used to come into the House and spend his time listening to and taking part in that debate. That is how he learned about Canada. He had learned about fisheries and Indian issues. He said it was a great learning experience.

It is tough for us now. When I look at this I see that I know bits and pieces through committees that I have sat on. I knew the pipeline from the energy committee and my experience in the north. However there are a lot of areas that I do not know.

This is not a question but just something I want to pass on to the House and to the hon. member. Perhaps the older method of doing things when we actually went through things department by department in the whole House was where we could get an overview rather than having 30 committees and being able to go to only one of them.