

United States as "sunset laws" to provide for the termination of programs or agencies which have outlived their usefulness.

● (2052)

It is very difficult to argue against the concept of cancelling programs which have outlived their usefulness. Rather let us consider what would be the best way to resolve that problem. Is it more objective to do it by establishing a special committee of the House of Commons which can bring forth proposals? Or is it more efficient to examine the workings of government and to ensure that through mechanisms such as Treasury Board management concepts are put in place appointing the deputy minister and his assistants to fulfil that function each year when they propose the budget for the following year. They will then look at a program, realize it has been carried out for 10 years, and then contemplate whether it is needed for another 10 years or five years. They will then likely come to the same conclusion as those made by a major corporation in the private sector, namely that it is not.

I believe this is already happening directly as a result of the kind of leadership that is being shown by the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) and his immediate predecessor, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien), when he was in that post. They insisted each year that, before departments brought their budgets to Treasury Board for approval and ultimate passage into the legislative process, they scrutinized and removed from their budgets whatever redundant programs there were.

I endorse the comment made by the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), the current very able vice-chairman of the public accounts committee, that perhaps that is not being done adequately. In fact, we know that it is not being done adequately.

I might say from my experience in the private sector, one of the concerns of chief executive officers in many large corporations is that this process is still not being carried out adequately in those corporations. We all have to improve. I believe the establishment of the position of comptroller general within the government service is going to be a step in the right direction. It will be one of his responsibilities to ensure that financial control procedures are indeed in place within departments and agencies of government which will require an annual examination and an explanation from them of how they have spent their money and how they propose to spend future moneys, just as we might anticipate would occur in a major organization in the private sector.

This concept of "sunset laws" which is running into difficulties in the legislative process in the United States and is far from being enacted at this time, is really an attempt to accomplish by the legislative process what first must be done at the management level.

Directors of a corporation, Mr. Speaker, cannot be expected to perform the day by day and week by week chores of a corporation, which includes the checking of detailed budget planning for five years or so. They must insist that professional people in their organization take on that responsibility and produce budgets and programs for their scrutiny.

### *The Economy*

Many members of parliament on both sides of this House must wonder at times how carefully this process has been followed before we are presented with the blue book in committee and are expected to ask logical and sensible questions on figures which are put before us. I suggest that this is the type of procedure that the President of Treasury Board is trying to implement. The appointment of a comptroller general will indeed assist members of parliament and give us an increasing assurance that, when we are considering programs for the coming year and the amount of money to be allocated to them, we can be confident the figures are accurate.

If we can achieve this—and I presume that this is what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has in mind with a special committee—it will be much more meaningful than 20 members of this House using valuable time which could be used for other important legislation. This job should be done by the capable executives who are hired to do it. From my point of view it is not our job; I think it is their job. It is our task to ensure that the job is being done adequately.

I suggest this is the problem that the United States government has encountered in its senate with the Muskie bill. If this is added to other legislative work, it is going to require far more time than the senate committees and subcommittees can spare. The same situation will arise in this House, although we have a somewhat different system. This is why this idea is bogging down in the United States, even though it originally had the support of 55 sponsors in the senate. It was part of President Carter's program and, was one item he mentioned in his initial fireside chat. The theory sounds great. Under the "sunset law" legislation it would be possible to halt all programs found to be redundant, which would mean that no money for them would be required the following year. Mr. Speaker, that is an over-simplified way of explaining it. You do not simply shut down the post office if you have a problem with the post office.

**Mr. Fraser:** Try starting the post office up.

**Mr. Martin:** Perhaps you look at other alternatives, but you certainly do not shut down the post office. You do not stop AECL from producing nuclear reactors because there have been some problems in that corporation in relation to their international dealings. You do not close down an organization such as Polysar because they became involved in what the report from the public accounts committee termed some wrongdoings in their international negotiations. Instead you must try to correct what is wrong and go on from there.

I suggest we should be supporting and occasionally pushing the government to implement additional procedures in order that the allocations of budgets are very closely scrutinized. After all, it is the electorate who are footing the bill for these things. There is a great deal of room for improvement. However, changes cannot happen overnight. The budget of this country and the budgets of our provinces, governed by various political parties, have grown tremendously over the past 10 years. All levels of government have made greater inroads into society than was the case 15 years ago. All of this is costing