

Appropriation Act

deficiency in the scrutiny of public spending. How can members, without anything even approximating the support staff of the Auditor General, discover how the estimates are being spent and if they are being spent wisely?

I think the hon. member's motion has considerable merit, but until we reform the committee system I do not think we are really going to get at the root of the problem. I agree in principle that the House needs more say in the make-up of and expenditures on programs which no longer seem to be experimental but are becoming a permanent feature of this government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take the opportunity afforded me to say a few words on the motion before us, which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, where a government programme entails the expenditure of public funds in excess of five million dollars annually to a purpose detailed only in an Appropriation Act and the programme continues in existence for more than one fiscal year, the government should introduce a measure to incorporate such programme in a distinct and detailed statute.

Mr. Speaker, I have read this motion through several times, and I am wondering whether it is aimed at specific programs, or the legislation affecting certain sectors or certain programs as has just been mentioned, for example, Local Initiatives, Opportunities for Youth, or New Horizons projects, or whether it is aimed at the industrial assistance or economic expansion programs. The hon. member is nodding in agreement, and I thank him, for I found the motion before us somewhat limited in scope, if it concerned only the small LIP and OFY programs, which never cost more than \$5 million.

As far as the economic expansion programs are concerned, I must say that I have always been a member of the regional economic expansion committee, and in all frankness I admit that I have often questioned myself about these programs. On the other hand, I can see that it would be difficult to pass legislation for each program costing over \$5 million, or lasting longer than a year, for we would then be creating a series of little statutes in the framework of a main statute. I think that we are having enough trouble getting the general principle accepted, without adopting legislation for each program of over \$5 million. We will never solve the problem, with the committee set-up we have today. Another formula must be found, and I agree with the hon. member that these projects of over \$5 million which extend over a year surely deserve more attention than our subsidy of \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$80,000 for the Local Initiatives Program or Opportunities for Youth Program.

It is understood that when, for example, an amount of \$500 million is voted, the minister has an absolute veto power as well as the right to determine what amount will be earmarked for such and such industry. As for us, we have no control over the administration of those programs. The hon. member probably had those programs in mind when he introduced his motion. This proposal will surely attract notice on the part of the government to the question of trying to put the members more in relation with those big programs within a legislation that is good in itself.

[Mr. Symes.]

Members lose all control over the operation of those programs, because they all have the benefit of a few of them in their constituency. It is hard to know how the money is administered and who gets it. With respect to the projects in my constituency, I would be at a loss to speak about them, because it is primarily a question of politics belonging more to the department than to Parliament, because we have granted all rights to the department. We voted for a package. We merely said to the minister: We are giving you \$500 million, administer that amount as you like it.

During the last election, when we gave \$500 million to regional economic expansion, the minister went across the province in order to distribute the million dollars to whoever wanted some, probably to whoever promised to give more to party funds.

In that connection, it is on those programs that I would draw the attention of this House; it is under that point of view that the member's motion constitutes, I believe, a blessing. As far as these small local initiative projects are concerned, we said a word about it a while ago. The LIP and OFY programs are good in themselves, but I think there is a lack of supervision as regards most of them. So much that I know students who work at the present time within three programs. They get three salaries because they work for three programs. That is not due to parliamentarians nor to the minister, but probably to the external organization, the regional organization, that shuts its eyes.

An hon. Member: He is a smart guy!

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): We have smart guys in our constituencies in the province of Quebec, throughout Canada, for I saw fantastic things in those programs. Speaking about the western programs, I even saw, in the field of aid to the natives, 62 teachers for 58 students; when I went to northern Manitoba, this is where I found it fantastic. They were employing 62 teachers to teach 58 Indians. This shows how we can exaggerate. I think that the government should find another formula.

We are told that these programs of Local Initiatives, Opportunities for Youth and New Horizons are temporary. Yes, because it is understood that these programs do not come within the member's motion, but I also want to say in passing that even these programs are lacking because the sectorial councils, in my opinion, often miss. I am not ready to accuse them in such a way, they do not have the necessary powers to try and have a general view of all these programs. I have spoken to some of them and I have been told that some of these committees are created to advise the department, to advise the people who will accept these projects, one projects among better projects according to criteria. It is obvious, indeed, that I never could find them. I ask of such a program: Why did you not accept it? Well, it was not according to our criteria. But these criteria were never defined and I think that they are much more political than economic.

Furthermore, even the persons appointed by the government in the various regions have not much authority. I refer to my own region for I have been in contact with them when a number of very acceptable projects have been established and the officials in Ottawa considered