

*Supply*

**Mr. Thomson:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to direct my questions to the President of the Treasury Board. I was curious about the minister's statement which he made last night, that he was in full accord with the concept of putting forward the expenditure projections for the next four or five years. Yet he was not prepared to produce those estimates for the projections to this House. I am curious to know why, if he is in favour of that concept, he declines to provide that information to the House of Commons.

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Chairman, I think that I made it clear in other statements that I favour long-term financial planning, which requires long-term financial projections. That is what the Lambert commission recommended. I simply said that I supported that recommendation.

**Mr. Thomson:** That was not my question. My question is simply this: is the President of the Treasury Board in favour of presenting those estimates and, if he is, will he present them? What reason does he have for not presenting them in the House?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Chairman, we are still in the same Committee of the Whole as we were last night. It seems to me that I answered that question completely. The question which was put to me asked whether I was in favour of long-term financial projections. The hon. member knows, as does the hon. member for York-Peel who is here with us, that the expenditure management system is dependent upon multiple year planning. It can operate in no other way. It seems to me that that has nothing to do with the issue as to whether I should be tabling expenditures or forecasts of any kind.

We are here to discuss the 1980-81 estimates. I was pleased to see that the hon. member for Vegreville at least was prepared to address some serious questions to my colleague, the Minister of Finance. It is now going into the second day and I have had officials here ready to respond to any serious questions with respect to the appropriation act in front of us, and I have yet to receive one question. I have been asked about issues, some of which should be properly addressed to my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Thomson:** Mr. Chairman, I do not see what multiple year planning has to do with the concept and failing to produce projections in the House, if indeed the minister is in favour of that concept.

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Chairman, if I may go back to yesterday's discussion, the hon. member for York-Peel asked whether I believed in the four-year or five-year forecasting program which has been suggested in such reports as the Lambert report. In reply to that question I said that I believe in four year or five-year programs. With regard to the question about tabling, I said that I was not prepared to table any such reports during the hearings before this committee.

**Mr. Stevens:** Why not?

**Mr. Johnston:** Because I am not prepared to table them. That is my right.

**Mr. Thomson:** Mr. Chairman, is the President of the Treasury Board responsible for expenditures, or is he not? If he is, why can he not table those projections in this House, or does he not have them?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that this is a dialogue of the deaf, the deaf being the hon. members on the other side. This same question was put to me last night. I answered by saying that I favour multiple-year projections. I indicated again today that multiple-year projections are necessary for an expenditure management system.

When asked if I was prepared to table any such projections, I said that I was not prepared to table them at this time. I am not giving any commitment with respect to the tabling of those projections, because, as I pointed out, the fiscal plan is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. The hon. member for York-Peel has made much of the fact that the former minister of finance—which he thought he then was, but it was the hon. member for St. John's West—came forward with some projections last December. I do not recall those projections being tabled by the then president of the treasury board. I may be wrong, and I stand to be corrected.

**Mr. Stevens:** There was a press release on January 22.

**Mr. Johnston:** My recollection is that these projections were tabled by the then minister of finance who was responsible for projections of that kind.

**Mr. Thomson:** Mr. Chairman, does the President of the Treasury Board consider himself to be responsible for all government spending or does he not?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Chairman, it appears that the hon. member is not aware of the expenditure management system developed by the hon. Bob Andras when he was president of the treasury board. It was adopted by the previous government, the Conservative administration. The purpose of the expenditure management system is to place policy committees in a position to determine their priorities. The purpose of Treasury Board in those circumstances is to be the over-all manager of those envelopes. Treasury Board's role will hopefully change from what it has been in the past. Over-all management and responsibility for those envelopes, the monitoring of those expenditures, and the approval of the operational and strategic plans that come forward, are the responsibility of Treasury Board.

● (1740)

Perhaps the hon. member is not fully familiar with the expenditure system, although I am sure the hon. member for York Peel is. Under the new expenditure management system the intention is to place responsibility from the top down, by putting responsibility for savings in the same envelope as the responsibility for spending. Responsibility for control and ordering priorities, cutting programs and substituting pro-