

### *Public Service*

The Government has implemented the major recommendations of the Lambert Commission. I should like to give some concrete examples of these reforms.

To begin with, a new policy and expense management system which starts planning expenses from the top down by using functional envelopes and which allows a closer integration of government priorities to decision-making mechanisms which decentralize the decision-making process while taking into account the complexity of government responsibilities, and which increases the minister's input in the decisions concerning the state's planning policies and expenses.

The yearly presentation to Parliament of a Government multi-year financial plan is the basis for a healthy government management and parliamentary control over public funds. Cabinet is regaining its ability to set a ceiling on public expenditures and ensure that hundreds of departments and agencies manage their operations efficiently to make the best possible use of taxpayers' money.

These initiatives have enhanced accountability to Parliament by providing us with more useful and more specific information which allows us to better judge the importance of programs and expenditures and puts us in a better position to reach responsible decisions. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, the committees of the House can examine the specific expenditures of each Department and agency as set out in Part III of the Estimates.

• (1750)

I admit that we still have a long way to go. I admit, as everyone knows in the Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates which I have the honour to chair, that there is still room for improvement. But we will work towards our common goal, that is to ensure a better accountability of public expenditures to Parliament, by making those books easier to understand.

In the area of personnel management accountability, there are also many substantial improvements. Thanks to a new policy on personnel management planning which integrates the development of human resources objectives in the financial plan, requirements are more easily determined and a clearly established responsibility channel is provided. This matter was also given much attention to ensure that managers themselves better understand their responsibilities. Through the development of a new management category, managers are now more aware of their duties and therefore in a better position to assume their responsibilities. In addition, these past few years, the Government has strengthened its policy on performance rating of public servants and senior officials in particular so as to ensure that the systems have not only been improved and the managers' roles clarified, but that the latter fulfill their responsibilities, account for their work, in a word, that they are accountable.

Accountability, Mr. Speaker, is an important and even vital principle within an organization such as the Government of

Canada. Let us keep in mind that it involves a professional and non-partisan commitment by senior officials. On the Government's service, senior officials and managers must, on the one hand, be aware of the various aspects of the political process and, on the other hand, remember that under the law and by tradition in this country, the Public Service must not take any political stand. If public servants are required to support and implement the policies put forward by the Government in office, they must perform their work so as to avoid being accused of partisanship neither in favour of the party in power nor against those who might disagree with the Government of the day. They must avoid any action that would deliberately favour one part at the expense of another. God knows, Mr. Speaker, that Section 32 of the Public Service Employment Act is causing problems! The matter of the political involvement acceptable for public servants will have to be resolved. I call upon my colleagues to come and sit on the Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates. We shall discuss the matter during two hours and a half. Mr. Speaker, I see that you are about to rise, which means that I do not have time to conclude my remarks. I am sorry, I wish I could complete my speech, but I shall do it some other time.

[English]

**Mr. John Evans (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, the time available to me is very short but I should like to put a few things on the record. First of all, it seems that the kinds of problems the Hon. Member referred to would be better dealt with—if his opinion is correct, and I do not think it is—by strengthening Parliament rather than attacking a Public Service that I think gives us the best service in the world today. It is an excellent Public Service. We have an excellent structure with very good, dedicated people at the senior levels. I have always found, as I think all Ministers have, that if the Government is sure about its policy and knows where it wants to go, it will get excellent service from the Public Service. If it does not provide direction to the Public Service, however, the policy development starts to take place elsewhere—in many cases at the request of Ministers. Perhaps that service is not what Hon. Members opposite would like to see—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert):** I am sorry to interrupt the Hon. Member but it is now six o'clock.

### PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 45 deemed to have been moved.