

*Government Orders*

The auditor general went on to say that the program's effectiveness was not measured, there was a lack of guidelines concerning project management and a lack of control and supervision.

Clearly, the Minister of Justice never bothered to read the auditor general's report. He should have. The former commission, however, was rather proud of its record. In 1991, in the commission's twentieth annual report, the president at the time, Gilles Létourneau, eager to justify the commission's existence, wrote that on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, the commission could be proud of the impressive number of its achievements, especially in the legislative field, that the commission was far more than an agency that made recommendations to Parliament on how to improve Canadian laws, and that, in fact, it had initiated extensive research in various areas of the law, producing 33 reports, 63 working papers, 78 published studies and more than 300 supporting documents.

I would be curious to know where all those documents are gathering dust. It is all very well to say that the commission produced reams of documents, but to what purpose? In 20 years only three proposals for legislation were accepted by Parliament. The explanation is simple. A commission that operates in tandem with governments cannot hope to amend or improve the law if its amendments or reforms are not part of the legislative agenda of the government of the day.

• (1030)

The auditor general's report is very informative about this aspect as well, and I quote: "The commission, however, is not satisfied with its impact on legislative changes and readily acknowledges its modest record in comparison with that of other law reform commissions. Because of its statutory independence, it establishes its own programs and has not been asked by the Minister of Justice to carry out specific research activities. Therefore, the commission's areas of research and study often have not been high priority areas for government legislative agendas".

The dissatisfaction of the commissioners at the time seems to indicate that the former commission was more in need of direction and controls than independence and broad, poorly defined mandates. The Department of Justice never played its role as a supervisory body. The situation was allowed to deteriorate to the point that the government no longer had a choice. It had to get rid of the commission and merge some of its resources with the Department of Justice, leading to the creation of the law reform division.

I must say the approach taken by the Minister of Justice is not very sound. He calls the future commission a new and improved law reform commission of Canada. If he really wanted improvements, he would leave things as they are. He already has a new and improved commission within his own department. I fail to understand the justification provided by the Minister of Justice, because, aside from handing out goodies to friends, the future commission has no reason to exist.

Upon tabling the bill, the minister stated that Canada's legal system faced complex problems that deserved more than a legal solution. Effective and long-term solutions required an approach that considered legal, social, economic and other aspects. The federal government was of the opinion that an independent and multidisciplinary law reform body was essential to this process.

The future commission will never be independent, since it will be a fan club of the Minister of Justice. Even assuming that appointments to the commission would not be partisan, the Minister of Justice is heading straight for disaster. A more or less independent commission would operate exactly like the former commission, in other words, without controls and without supervision.

The Minister of Justice has not learned from the mistakes of the former commission. He preferred to ignore the auditor general's report which was very critical of the commission. He still does not realize that his department already has a division that is concerned specifically with law reform.

Those who ignore the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them. And that is exactly what the Minister of Justice is doing today. His ignorance will cost us three millions dollars annually. Another good reason to say yes on October 30.

[English]

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that in these days, when we find so little to agree on with our friends from the Bloc, I would recommend to Canadians the extremely well researched and cogent arguments put forward in the paper by my hon. colleague who preceded me. Many of the points that were made should be persuasive to this government.

Unfortunately, one gets the impression in this House, and it is more than just an impression, that what we say and do here in debate is simply smoke and mirrors and window dressing and hot air, because the course of the government is set and the government members, who are in the majority, stand up and support it invariably. The excellent, well reasoned considerations that should be taken into account before these pieces of legislation are foisted on Canadians simply go by the by.

However, it is my duty to represent the people of Canada, particularly the people of Calgary North who elected me, by putting forward my concerns and my objections to this piece of legislation.

• (1035)

When our country is in real difficulty with respect to public safety and the workings of our criminal justice system, I find it passing strange that the thing on the top of the justice minister's mind is allowing the politically appointed parole board to investigate itself if it decides to do that. He is setting up a bunch of political appointments to make recommendations to the minister about what he should do about the law. I do not think