

priorities, as it were, may well lead to administrative indigestion. One can get into a situation wherein much of the effective working force finds its energies absorbed in training new recruits at a time when by definition these new recruits are not fully productive. Therefore, a more gradual approach to the solution of the problems of the unit may be indicated. In areas where the function of the unit is declining problems may arise as regards placement of staff with particular training and experience into positions where they can be used to greatest effect.

To reinforce this particular argument one can say in respect of staff in general that the total strength of the Civil Service should bear some relation to the size of the population it is serving, taking into account the fact that some economies of scale can be expected to develop as the country grows and making due allowance for the obsolescence of some functions, changes in technology as they affect the operations of the service directly and for entirely new tasks that grow out of our technological development.

All this implies a certain amount of judgment and, in fact, the representatives of the Treasury Board in dealing with departments in the establishment review committees or in Estimates discussions, consider the criteria so reached merely as suggesting orders of magnitude. In these discussions the department will of course bring forward its special problems, known in sufficient detail only to the experts of the department, so that they can be weighed against the general picture I have sketched above. The first purpose of developing the general picture is to find out in advance whether all reasonable requests can be accommodated within the likely total or whether certain drastic revisions of policy may be required. The second purpose is to give the members of our staff a sense of proportion in dealing with individual departments.

In the consultations with the departments, the Treasury Board representatives do not appear as experts in the work of particular departments although they endeavour to know enough about them to understand their problems and to ask penetrating and suggestive questions. The function of the Treasury Board representative is rather that of a somewhat skeptical layman whose task is to indicate to the departments the over-all expenditure policy of the government and to be able to report upon proposed developments which involve adjustments of particular policies. This approach tends to cast the burden of determining priorities at the planning stage upon the department where it properly belongs, that is, upon the shoulders of those who are in the best position to compare the importance, one with another, of their various activities.

The special pleas made by the departments as the various meetings can be brought back and compared as to their priority with the situations portrayed in meetings with other departments, the final objective being to put the Board into the position where it can judge all proposals on a consistent basis. It is admitted, of course, that this attempt can produce only approximate results but if good budgeting is to be the object the attempt must be made continually to improve the method of assessment.