

to be, when the executive arm of the government is not as powerful as it ought to be—indeed with this parliament—decisions are difficult to make, particularly in a time of crisis, because of the parliamentary set-up. The hon. member, by demanding the production of these documents made available to ministers or to the Treasury Board, or budgets prepared prior to the drafting of the estimates, would be delaying the whole parliamentary process. I am sure he does not want to do that, but I suggest that would be the result of his request. He would be hamstringing the whole executive decision-making process of government. Indeed, this would be most harmful to the process of government in Canada.

When the hon. member spoke on May 24, and I read his speech with great attention, he admitted that when presenting a motion like this he felt, with his lay brain—I mean in the sense of his uninformed brain, because he is not an accountant and neither am I—there would be great difficulty sorting through all this mass of information covering 1,200 pages which, when translated, amounts to almost twice as many pages. Perhaps I should read what he said as it appears at page 4068 of *Hansard* for May 24:

At the moment members of parliament basically have available to them information contained in the blue book of estimates, which is a veritable sea of figures. Perhaps a member who has been here for a generation or longer may be able to find his way through them, but most of us have not been here for that long.

Perhaps he had in mind the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

An hon. Member: He has been here for three generations.

Mr. Blais: Perhaps you are right; maybe even longer. In that statement the hon. member is mouthing words which I have thought. If we have trouble going through the estimates in the blue book, then think of the tremendous difficulty and the insurmountable chore we would have in reviewing the entire background of the long-winded programs which civil servants prepare and submit to their ministers. Think of all the mass of figures put down by those little accountants, with their little pencils in their little offices in respect of their little programs, in order to persuade their ministers of the value of their ideas. It is almost impossible to imagine the difficulty we might incur.

If we could devise a system whereby we could really analyse and completely digest all the information provided by civil servants so that someone like myself could come to a reasonable conclusion about a given program, then I would agree with the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore that we should look at such exposition or analysis. This is something I could understand. Perhaps I could then understand the principle being followed.

When we look at the whole process of government and the way ideas are fed into the system, we can see how impossible it becomes to expect that all this information leading to government policy could be analysed, classified and fed to someone who has trouble with the blue book. Perhaps it is understandable that he cannot fathom the blue book. I, too, have ideas and being on the government side I have greater hopes that my ideas might receive favour than does the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore

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who may be sitting in the opposition for some time. I may be less frustrated and, therefore, not as sympathetic as the hon. member and his colleagues toward the idea of seeing the inner workings of government.

In any event, when I submit an idea, an opinion, a view or a program it goes into the pipeline at the party caucus. If a minister thinks there is some merit in the idea and that it might receive a sympathetic view from his departmental officials, he will feed it through the department pipeline. If his officials then decide the idea is good, it will be resubmitted to the cabinet. One can easily understand why there is such a tremendous amount of information and why this procedure takes such a long time.

After this whole procedure, the minister may incorporate the idea into one of his programs and submit it to the Treasury Board. He might then say, "Mr. President of the Treasury Board, these are the programs that will advance civilization through eon, eon and eon." He might suggest that they are programs that would assist in advancing Canadianism. Then when the President of the Treasury Board or the members themselves have considered the program, someone might say, "It is a very good idea perhaps 20 years from now, but today it does not have a chance because the Tories across the way are yapping again about the size of the budget." There is a lot of feedback of this type in respect of government involvement.

In any event, there is this kind of interplay. The hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore would like to grab the whole works, the whole kit and caboodle. He suggested it is difficult to understand budgets A, B and X, and I would suggest that he could not possibly understand all the information that goes into decision-making. I would urge the hon. member to consult civil servants he may know. I understand that lately hon. members over there have a good relationship with civil servants, particularly those in the foreign affairs department. Perhaps he could gain access to information in that way.

At the risk of being a little facetious, I would suggest to the hon. member that the blue book is a very complete document. I agree that there may be ways of ameliorating the difficulties of sorting through all the information in this book in order that members can ask relevant questions in respect of the direction the government is taking. It is also my suggestion that hon. members are apt to refer to items in the blue book which will attract the public's attention, perhaps because of some political vulnerability. Those are the items which receive the attention of hon. members in the opposition benches. It is the right of hon. members to refer to small items that may be of embarrassment to the government. Perhaps they see this as a way of discharging their responsibility.

Let me suggest to hon. members opposite that if they did not waste time in the miscellaneous estimates committee and in the public accounts committee by raising points of order and all sorts of unnecessary balderdash, but really concentrated on the estimates, a reasonable analysis could be made and relevant questions could be asked. Perhaps in this way the system might work much better. But that is not the fault of the government; it is the fault of the opposition. It is all well and good to say we want to be nice guys, but sure as hang—