

Government Orders

to Bill C-52. Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Charlevoix:

That the motion be amended by striking out all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-52, An Act to establish the Department of Public Works and Government Services and to amend and repeal certain acts, because it does not provide for the development of a code of ethics aimed at ensuring the transparency of contracting activities and the acquisition of all goods and services by the Department of Public Works and Government Services".

The Deputy Speaker: Having held consultations, I find the motion in order.

[English]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the privilege of being able to respond to the proposal by the government to put into legislation something which it has already done, that is to amalgamate the Department of Supply and Services, the Department of Public Works, the Government Telecommunications Agency and the Translation Bureau into one new department, the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Before I comment on the actual legislation before us, I cannot help but note that things are being done in backward order. The thing is already done. The decision has been made and implemented and it will not be reversed. We are now discussing it and soon we will be voting to formalize a decision already made.

I wonder if I am the only one who notices illogical things like this. The same thing was done on the question of the military. With much fanfare the government cancelled the helicopter contracts. With great flair it announced the closure of a number of military bases and moving them around. Then a military review was announced and the work started on thinking about what should be done. After some time the committee will announce its findings and we will probably discuss the report, but the actions have already been taken at huge expense. There will be even greater expense if it becomes apparent that some of these decisions need to be reversed.

● (1240)

We have had exactly the same thing in the last few days in the post office. We knew in June that the post office applied for an increase in first class postal rates to 45 cents. Ironically the government proceeded to do the work. The stamps were printed and distributed. Now we see cabinet deciding whether or not to actually do it. Meanwhile the taxpayers have spent the money.

No real business that has any hope of surviving can operate in this way. We need to do our analysis first and include in that analysis the most cost effective way of making changes. Why is it that government can waste billions of dollars simply by

terribly poor planning and by taking hasty actions that are not well thought through? Billions of dollars are forcibly removed from citizens by the bully of taxation.

I need to get on with the main topic of my speech but I cannot forget the Pearson airport deal. Is it not another example? If the former government had not been in such a big hurry to sign contracts without having covered all the facts of the situation first, we would not be in the mess we are in now with that deal. I find it appalling that the government is now ramming through a bill respecting that deal which will hide payments made at the discretion of the minister from parliamentary or public scrutiny.

I need to turn the corner and talk about Bill C-52. After what I have just said members may be surprised to note that in general I am in favour of the legislation. In general I support the move toward downsizing, but the plan needs to be well thought out. A number of issues need to be tackled. They must be done in the right order.

In analysing the situation one should really ask the following questions: First, what public service, what actual work, what functions do we want the department to perform? Second, in order to achieve what we want the department to do, how can we best organize it so that it can perform those functions with the greatest efficiency?

The amalgamation proposed in Bill C-52 is positive in the sense that it will result in the reduction of overlapping duties and functions. It should reduce overall costs, though that remains to be seen. There will be a reduction of overhead costs. Hopefully the new department will be able to deliver the services specified in a timely and efficient manner.

Another efficiency will be achieved by combining the annual report and the estimates. It will make it possible for managers, and indeed members of the House, to make decisions more effectively and more quickly on whether or not an expenditure is being controlled by looking at the consolidated statements.

There are two broad principles governments should use. The principles have been given to us by the people. The Reform Party is articulating the principles on behalf of citizens who have not been heard by governments of the past 20 to 40 years. The first principle is that governments, civil servants, politicians and political parties exist to serve the people. They should demonstrate this service at all times.

I cannot help but interrupt my speech again to draw the attention of the House to a great misunderstanding concerning the Reform Party. Several days ago the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt gave a rather cute member's statement in which she echoed the misinformation broadcast by our sometimes untrustworthy CBC. She implied that members of the Reform Party were somehow herded along by the leadership of the party. The facts are that the leadership of the party and