

Public Service Performance

● (1600)

[English]

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the President of the Treasury Board a couple of questions arising out of his statement. First of all, may I point out that the announcement really has nothing to do with improving performance but concerns the establishment of a performance measurement system, something that was to be incorporated in 1973 and in place by 1977-78. In the background document which the minister has provided, entitled "Progress Report of the Measurement of Performance of the Public Service of Canada" the following statement appears:

Furthermore, some departments failed to modify their performance measurement systems in accordance with changes in organizational structure, outputs and procedures, as is essential. Where this happened, the systems deteriorated and managers no longer had confidence in the results they produced. In a few cases, the systems fell into disuse.

Moreover, some departments were slow to respond to the Treasury Board's 1973 directive—

Can the minister give the House any assurance that the directive he has now issued will be complied with? It seems to me that according to the report of the Auditor General and the testimony given before the public accounts committee, one of the major problems within the public service is that guidelines being formulated by the Treasury Board and departments are not being followed. We have the guidelines and the regulations, but they are not being followed. Can the minister give any assurance to the House that they will be?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has identified a concern that I have and was aware of when I took on this portfolio a couple of months ago. Like everything else, it is a matter of degree. There is substance to the sentiment he expresses, the questions raised by the document I tabled and some of the comments of the Auditor General. As to assurance, I could not stand here and say that by virtue of my taking over this portfolio or with a sweep of the hand, all those things will be solved.

With all due respect to the hon. member, if he were ever in a position to be asked that question he would, in all honesty, have to say the same thing. This, in fact, is one of a series of measures and I hope hon. members opposite recognize that I am making them public as I go along, as quickly as I make the decision, after the various options are presented to me. One of them was the tabling of the document on public service pensions, and there will be others to come. I will do my best to get on with that. Much of the work was done before I appeared on the scene, of course, but I believe the effect of this in some cases will tighten things up and in other cases will motivate people.

I totally agree with these kinds of comments. This is just a measurement; it does not of itself improve performance, but it is a very important instrument by which we can get improved performance. If we do not know, then we do not have standards by which to judge. By itself, it will not solve the problems. All I can say is that the commitment was shared by the secretariat to determine that where the directives of the Treas-

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

ury Board have been looked at again, and where we have felt they were not totally adhered to, we are going to make sure that happens in future.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer and for his openness in tabling the document, because it is very helpful when we address ourselves to this important problem. I also thank him for his admission that this measurement system alone will not improve performance in the public service. To that extent perhaps the press release is somewhat overstated. I should like to ask the minister if he could explain a passage on page 3 of the document. I think this is important because it falls right in line with the original problem of not only identifying the problem areas in performance but in then taking the necessary steps to improve that performance. On page 3 the following statement appears:

As a process, performance measurement is in fact essentially neutral. Only the results revealed by the process indicate whether operations are better, worse or unchanged. Regardless of the trend of the results, the fact that a department has taken the trouble to set up a measurement system is "good" in the sense that it is applying sound management practice to its operations. This means that any application is "good" in the above sense, even though operating results may show a falling trend, say, for efficiency.

I ask the minister how he can rationalize a falling off in efficiency as some form of good management practices and principles.

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I think that if the hon. member would read the passage again he would realize the answer is self-evident. Deteriorations of improvements in efficiency are identified, so there is a measurement by which to judge performance. If you do not have a measurement, you do not know whether efficiency is improving or not. I think that in itself is an indication and a candid observation that in some cases efficiency is falling off, although I do not think it, by itself, necessarily means that somebody can do something about it. The knowledge will stimulate concerted action.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I have a further question about the objective of establishing greater accountability to parliament. In this whole question of performance management, is there any way in which parliament will be made aware of these internal assessments or will be able to pass judgment on the application of the performance objectives that will emerge as a result of this system, or are we only going to see the positive side of the program?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, as I am learning in my dealings with the hon. member, that is a loaded question. Of course, I would lean to maximum disclosure of these matters and that is a subject to which I am addressing myself at Treasury Board. In line with my responsibility I have looked at the whole question of evaluation, and so on.

● (1610)

I will not give the hon. member a final answer. It is connected with many other discussions which have taken place, as well as on freedom of information, and so on. Most certainly we are looking at the matter. As for the maximum