

*Government Orders*

I know perfectly well that streamlining government operations will not in itself get us out of the awful mess we are in. It has been said many times in this House that the entire cost of government operations is less than half of the annual deficit. If we do not start there, where will we start and when?

Let me cite a couple of specific examples of where I believe that small but significant cuts could be made in departmental spending. The mining sector has 168 full time equivalent employees and a budget of just under \$26 million. More than half of that budget represents contributions to mineral development agreements with the provinces, primarily with Quebec. These are sunset programs, most of which will expire next year.

Planning, observing and studying these MDA programs requires a substantial investment in time and resources. If the federal government must participate in these programs as a form of equalization, and I question the wisdom of that, it would be much more efficient to just send cheques. We do not need two levels of bureaucracy administering the same programs.

The mining sector's most essential functions are gathering statistics and helping to formulate government policy with respect to taxation, investment and trade. These duties could readily be handled by Stats Canada and by a few specialists in the various ministries responsible for the administration and execution of the policy.

At the end of the day the usefulness of this small sector of the Department of Natural Resources is open to question. Certainly the possible cost benefits of dismantling it should be considered.

Not all questionable department expenditures are related to overlap and duplication. The Atomic Energy Control Board is the sole agency in Canada which regulates the storage and use of radioactive material. This is fitting and proper. The agency suffers from a severe case of bureaucratic bloat. Between 1985 and 1993 the number of licences to sell, store or use nuclear materials decreased by 17 per cent, from 4,543 to 3,743, while the number of AECB employees rose from 252 to 373, a 48 per cent increase.

• (1625)

This organization is supervising only 10 licensees per employee. Senior department officials attribute this ridiculous ratio to increased public concern for health and safety. Really, now.

The AECB is now working on a partial cost recovery basis. All private licensees pay a fee for service. The AECB provides no service. It is a regulatory agency and its fees are therefore just another form of taxation targeted at small specialized industries that cannot duck. The system reminds me of the

practice in China of requiring a condemned man's family to pay for the cartridges used for his execution.

If the agency got rid of one third of its employees it would not have to proceed with its well known plans to increase fees by an additional one third annually until 1997.

Before I conclude my remarks I want to tell the House my favourite civil service story. It concerns Charles Camsell, an early director of the Geological Survey of Canada. He and some young assistants were on a long canoe traverse of several weeks' duration. They came to a Hudson Bay post. They had been living on the usual diet of the day which was beans, bannock and fish for these many weeks. One of the young fellows got up the nerve to approach Mr. Camsell and ask him if they could get a little variety in their diet since there was a store near at hand. The old man reached down into his pocket, pulled out a quarter and sent one of the boys over to the Hudson Bay post for a can of tomatoes.

If we had one or two guys like Charlie in the Department of Natural Resources today we might see some action in the direction which the people on my side of the House would like to see.

In closing, the mandate in article 6 of this act is a motherhood mission statement which hardly anyone would disagree with. It looks great, but should there not be something in there about cost effectiveness?

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Manicouagan—Canada Labour Code.

[English]

The first three members on Bill C-48 had a limit of a 40 minutes maximum. Now we will go into the next phase of debate during which members will have 20 minute interventions, followed by ten minutes of questions and comments.

[Translation]

**Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the House again today at the second reading of Bill C-48, an Act to establish the Department of Natural Resources and to amend related Acts.

I would like to add to the statement by my colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton Northwest and Minister of Natural Resources. The natural resource sector is tremendously important to Canada's economy, and the Department of Natural Resources should ensure that this sector remains a cornerstone of Canada's economic growth as well as a significant source of jobs.