

*Disclosure of Documents*

Canada. Frankly, my reaction is that if any of us sit back and think about it sensibly, we will understand it.

● (1720)

When you talk about the planning, programming and budgeting structures used by Treasury Board you are referring to a concept that was adopted by the government a few years ago to do its very best to bring together the complexities of governing a country such as Canada and indeed to decide on priorities for the use of the limited tax revenues available and giving the political leaders the best advice available from all the various sources of the Public Service. To say now that the government should present, on demand of the members of the House, all such papers and advice surely is to negate the whole system of parliament as we know it. If this suggestion were carried to the extreme, the decision-making would no longer be the responsibility of the political leaders but would fall back one step and would be given to the people who create policies. So, while the principle is good, I think there is great danger in applying it across the board.

In order to promote the effective management of financial resources through improved accounting systems, the government employs a system commonly known as planning, programming and budgeting. The concepts common to all planning-programming-budgeting systems are these, if I may outline them for the House. First, the setting up of specific objectives; second, the systematic analysis to clarify objectives and to assess alternative ways of meeting them; third, the framing of budgetary proposals in terms of programs directed toward the achievement of objectives; next, the projection of the costs of these programs a number of years in the future. In addition, there is the formulation of plans of achievement year by year for each program and, finally, an information system for each program to supply data for the monitoring of achievement of program goals and to supply data for the reassessment of the program objectives and the appropriateness of the program itself.

In other words, there is planning ahead to find priorities and make readjustments as situations change from year to year, and to make sure that there is communication back and forth among all the various departments. So, indeed this planning program and budgeting system is responsive to, and always alert to, changes. The elements of the Canadian government PPB system have been developed in harmony with the aforementioned general concepts and within the context of total resource allocation. By the latter phrase is meant that there is an explicit recognition that the total resources are limited in terms of the individual and collective demands of departments, and that there has to be a setting of priorities by the government itself in light of which departments can plan and budget.

Intensive study is made of feasible alternative ways of attaining defined objectives with a view to determining the approach which is most likely to achieve the greatest benefit for a given cost or, conversely, the approach by which a given objective will be achieved at minimum cost. The government, of course, has a grave responsibility in trying to reach that objective. A number of techniques have been found useful in such studies and the application of these techniques has been found useful in such studies.

[Mr. Fleming.]

The application of these techniques is properly the work of analysts trained in their use. I very much question whether those analysts will confidently go about their duties in this regard if their decisions and recommendations are subject to political question before they can be given to the government which must exercise its responsibility in respect of decision-making.

The adoption of an analytic approach to government decision-making of the kind that underlies planning-programming-budgeting is probably inevitable in a complex society such as we have in Canada today. The minimum needs of shelter, sustenance, internal order and the like having been met, there are innumerable possible ways of improving the quality of life and not all the ways can be pursued at one time because of the limited resources the government has. Choices have to be made as to what should be done, in the full realization that the choosing to do some things means that resources will be unavailable to do other things. The complexity of the considerations having a bearing on these choices invites the application of all that modern techniques of analysis and of gathering and processing information have to offer. Departmental program forecast submissions, which are an integral part of this process, are therefore voluminous documents which would be very costly to reproduce for purposes of tabling. In addition, they sometimes, of necessity, refer explicitly to cabinet decisions. As a matter of policy, documents of this character are not tabled and surely should not be if this is against the public interest.

As I have indicated, program forecasting is an important element in the budgetary system of the government. One of its main purposes is to provide the Treasury Board with information which forms the basis of an optimum allocation of resources among the competing requirements for all programs in the coming fiscal year. This information is also important for improved over-all government planning in subsequent years beyond the coming fiscal year. In addition, the Program Forecast is a useful vehicle for departmental management in focusing attention on the pattern of current and future expenditures, and in decision-making in respect of the priorities which will be attached to the various programs, activities and projects for which the department is responsible.

The activities of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, involving as they do industrial development and trade promotion ventures, obviously reflect directly on the plans and initiatives of individual companies and business organizations. In explaining the advantages of the proposals contained in program forecasts to the Treasury Board it is often desirable, indeed necessary, to employ specific examples which expose the interests of those individual companies. For example, most firms regard their research and development work as being highly confidential. They are normally attempting to develop a new or better product before their competitors do so. If it is successful, the firm is likely to have an advantage in both the domestic market and in export markets. This is where Industry, Trade and Commerce steps in.

In some instances the Canadian firm is competing against other domestically-based companies, although in many cases it is competing on an international basis with