

At the same time the staff of the Treasury Board will be considering the total picture as they might expect it to emerge in the budget. The implications of that picture and the assumptions underlying it will be communicated to the Minister of Finance so that he may give what directions he wishes to this staff. Thus it is that the Treasury Board staff are able to indicate to departments the general context in which their proposals will be examined.

It may sound from this as though all the analysis is concentrated in a small portion of the year. This is in fact not so although the load during the period the establishment review committees are sitting and the Estimates are being considered is greater and more urgent than at other times. However, there is an even earlier process which continues throughout the year and which serves to inform the Board and its staff of issues that will arise when the period of formal consideration is reached. It will be recalled that the Treasury Board Division has a departmental function in the sense that it is responsible for producing such information as the Minister requires for his participation in impending policy decisions at Cabinet level. Many of the problems that will ultimately turn up in Estimates are roughed out at this stage. In fact, of course, the approximate costing involved is essential to the decision in principle.

Moreover, issues of a somewhat lower order of magnitude which have implications for future Estimates are constantly coming before the Treasury Board throughout the year. For this purpose the Treasury Board meets weekly and has laid before it all such matters, as well as many cases of rather more detailed nature that are required by law or custom to be approved by the Board. These latter include a variety of items of a regulatory or housekeeping nature and adjustments to programs which have been approved in current Estimates. The precise machinery for dealing with these adjustments involves requests for authority to transfer between the allotments into which a vote is broken down for control purposes throughout the year. Requests of this type very frequently indicate that certain programs are lagging while others can be expedited. After all, the formulation for which they are an amendment is only an estimate and is subject to change as circumstances develop within the limits of the Parliamentary authority spelled out in the vote title.

Another class of cases of this nature is requests by Ministers for authority to let contracts over sizes laid down in the Government Contract Regulations. These keep the Board and its staff informed as to the progress of various programs. In this instance as in some others, it has become the practice to route through the Treasury Board departmental submissions which require final approval by Council in order to become effective. The reasons for this are that the meetings of the Board afford a better opportunity for close scrutiny of individual cases and that the Ministers have available the analytical facilities of a staff familiar with the approved programs of the departments.

For the rest the Board is acting on its own authority under various statutes, mainly the Financial Administration Act. Quite frequently, departments request direction or approval for changes in their long-term plans within the general framework of policy laid down by Cabinet. A good part of the work of the staff of the Board during the year is there-