

already delayed bills and other documents that we would find unacceptable in this House.

● (1732)

I am concerned, although I suppose gratified to some extent that we are already taking this matter under our wing and that there is a response by ministries to the pressures of restraint. I am satisfied that although the concept of the bill is good, it needs more time, more thinking, in order to encompass these concerns I have tried to express, before we send it to committee.

May I again thank the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) for allowing me the opportunity to express something that has concerned me for a long time, and may I compliment him for bringing two very important matters before the House within two days.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peter Stollery (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on the bill. I think it is fair to say that everyone in the House would agree with the concept that we should have accurate cost accountability in the production of the various papers and information distributed by the government. As the previous speaker mentioned, we get some overly spectacular documents from the government and the ministries. Many are expensive and exaggerated.

I am sure we all have days when we look at this stuff and realize that it is produced at a high cost for a limited audience. On the other hand, one of the great costs that is not addressed in the bill is the cost to this House of Commons and committees of answering questions. I am told that it sometimes costs as much as \$5,000 to produce an answer. The information sought is readily available to members for many of these questions that are put on the order paper. I am dismayed when I think of the amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act passed in this House in the last session and the number of questions that were put regarding it when many of the answers were readily obtainable at the parliamentary library.

An examination of this bill gives me the impression that it might cost more to administer it than would be saved by publishing the accounts referred to. One more group of people would be required to produce each set of figures and this cost would go on and on whilst the group grew grander and larger. It too would probably produce a report, another piece of expensive literature, that would end up in the wastebasket along with the mountains of paper that come in all the time.

Like all other hon. members I am sure, when I get one of these expensive three or four-coloured productions on a subject that has a limited audience, I wonder at the expense involved. There are the three or four coloured books issued on such things as the spawning habits of the Atlantic salmon. But of course, members are guilty and some ask as many as 50 or 100 questions, the answers to which are readily available to them but which will cost large sums of money to print out. Referring again to the book published in both languages on the spawning habits of the Atlantic salmon, I have a copy in my office

Public Reports

because the photographs are spectacular. There is a description of the Atlantic salmon proceeding up the rivers on the east coast to spawn and if I remember correctly it also describes how salmon on the west coast proceed up the creeks on Vancouver Island. It would be interesting to know how many people looked at that book which I think was prepared for a fisheries conference. It must have cost a lot of money.

● (1742)

An hon. Member: Perhaps we did it for the salmon too.

Mr. Stollery: As the hon. member says, perhaps we did that for some salmon. Somewhere in a river there must be a "salmon library" which is filled with small and medium-sized salmon which study these books in order to learn something about their birthright.

I know other members are waiting to speak on this most important issue, and in conclusion let me say that, although it is hard to disagree with the purpose of this bill, it does seem to present more problems and to raise more questions than it answers.

[Translation]

Mr. Alan G. Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour for me to have the opportunity to address the House on a piece of legislation tabled by the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) who is much dedicated to his work here in Ottawa. I do not know any other member who is as dedicated and sincere in carrying on his responsibilities in the capital of Canada.

[English]

I think the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) touches upon an issue which is becoming increasingly a concern of Canadians in all walks of life, namely, the cost of government and government services in general across this country. It really does not matter whether we are talking about the federal level, the provincial level, the municipal level, various government agencies with which the average consumer must interface from time to time, universities, boards of education, hospitals, even down to fancier than necessary food wrappings which one finds in the supermarket, in general the consumer is constantly being faced with mounting concern over what his dollar, whether it be tax dollar or purchase dollar, can buy.

This may sound a long way from the issue of paper and cost accounting of paper used in government, but I suggest that it is not. The issue that is raised by the hon. member for Vaudreuil is in a very real sense a microcosm of this whole problem. The hon. member for York East (Mr. Stollery) made reference a little earlier to recent Auditor General reports. The subject under discussion is an extremely difficult one for individual members, I suggest even for the Auditor General, to come to grips with.

The one thing that hits you immediately, Mr. Speaker, about government departments today, regardless of whether they are at the federal or provincial level, or whether it is some