

Oral Questions

sively during the course of the social security review. I have asked my officials to update that particular study; indeed, I believe it has been recently updated. If the hon. member is interested in the conclusions of that examination, I will be happy to make them available to her.

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GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION**IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN FORM OF ESTIMATES—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Given the recommendations of the public accounts and the Auditor General in 1975 regarding the form of the estimates, and in the light of the statement by the Auditor General's office that there is at present inadequate information to enable parliament to establish the accountability of government, I ask the minister whether it is his intention, now that we are about to be faced with supplementary estimates which are in themselves an example of government spending out of control, to bring in specific recommendations with regard to the form of the estimates so that the House can at last have some information about the free spending habits of this administration?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): The supplementary estimates about to be tabled will give a clear indication of the stringent degree of control which has been exercised, since they are considerably less than was the case in previous years.

An hon. Member: We hope so!

Mr. Basford: Yet day after day you want more money spent on something.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Andras: Leaving that aside, the whole form of the estimates and the information conveyed to the House is being examined, as I indicated to the hon. member for Vegreville in answer to a similar question a few days ago.

PROPOSAL THAT ESTIMATES OF ONE DEPARTMENT DESIGNATED BY OPPOSITION BE EXAMINED BY HOUSE

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Given the seriousness of this matter and the total frustration felt by the House in its attempt to deal with it and in light of the statements by the Auditor General, may I ask the minister whether he is prepared, notwithstanding the work of the committee on procedure and the standing orders of the House, to recommend that the estimates of at least one department of government to be designated by the official opposition be brought back to this House for examination without any limitation as to time?

[Mr. Lalonde.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to see how that falls within the administrative competence of the President of the Treasury Board.

ALLEGATION DEPARTMENTS ENCOURAGED TO SPEND ALL AVAILABLE FUNDS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to address a question to the President of the Treasury Board. In view of a statement by Pat Lafferty of the Auditor General's office to the public accounts committee on March 23 to the effect that managers have been specifically encouraged to ensure that all available funds are spent by the end of the year, and since this clearly shows there is no incentive for public servants to be efficient with the public's money, but, rather that there is actually a strong incentive built into the system to the contrary, would the hon. gentleman inform us whether he has any plans to rectify this scandalous situation?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): If, in fact, such a practice ever existed, the restraint program and the monitoring system now in process will certainly eliminate any tendency in that direction. But I do not believe this is a widespread practice.

ALLEGATION BY AUDITOR GENERAL NO WAY OF DETECTING FRAUD

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): If the President of the Treasury Board would care to look at the proceedings of the public accounts committee for March 23 he would understand what I am talking about. I would draw his attention, now, to the following statement by the Auditor General:

What worries me quite a bit is that if there is fraud occurring there is really not much evidence of important ways by which it can be detected.

With that statement in mind, will the minister inform the House of the steps he will be taking to remedy this appalling situation?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): As usual, the hon. member, like some of his friends, is indulging in overkill and over-statement.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Andras: Notwithstanding this, we take a very serious view of the matter. But I would point out that the same question has been floating around during the question period in a different form for a long time.