

Routine Proceedings

nected with the policy makers who could look at the systems.

I implore the department and this government to look at that over the next while and reconsider where they are going. It is important when we have a department in charge and dealing with as much money as this department that we ensure as taxpayers in Canada that those systems work. They should work within the context of how they were set up to work and in the context of giving value to people for money. We should ensure that they do not cost the Treasury of this country, particularly during a time of restraint and recession, billions and billions of dollars because of some people within the system who are protecting their jobs and their backsides because the programs have been inappropriately set up.

I urge the House to pass this motion of concurrence to send a message to the Department of Finance that this House will stand by its public accounts committee and that all departments should pay attention to the recommendations of the public accounts committee.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take a whole lot of the House's time. Members may or may not know that this is the subject matter that I taught at university. I had the honour some time ago, in the first two or three years after my election, to be the keynote speaker at the founding conference of the Evaluation Research Society of Canada which brought together professionals in this field for the very first time. It is a group that has grown in terms of its influence. It is a group that has grown in terms of its knowledge. The methodology today is I believe a great deal more advanced than it was some 10 years ago.

If you want to go back far enough in my own professional career, I was engaged in evaluation research activities as a graduate student in a doctoral program in the late 1960s and subsequently in the early part of the 1970s. I did an awful lot of evaluations in this country and some of the first that were ever done for the Government of Canada, in particular for the Department of National Health and Welfare.

The Department of Employment and Immigration I guess was larger. The one I remember with particular joy

was in health and welfare, but there were some for the Privy Council Office and other bodies of government.

I guess I felt compelled to speak this morning because of the subject matter and the reality of the nature of this place. I have not heard a word of praise for the current government being in office seven years and for putting an evaluation research program into the Department of Finance. He did say it happened in 1987, but he did not say it with praise as the chairman of the public accounts committee. The place would work a little better if praise was praise and blame was blame and each was articulated according to reality.

The previous government that the current chairman served did not do it. The trigger I guess was the scientific research tax credit which was mentioned. That was a loss of tax revenue of \$3 billion or \$4 billion because people did not evaluate the consequences of the tax before they put it in. It happened so fast and the leakage was so great that the world has never been quite the same since.

If I were a methodologist looking at the committee report, I would see a committee which has a great deal of difficulty believing the evidence it gets from the Comptroller General as well as the Department of Finance about what it has done and what it intends to do.

• (1200)

It acknowledges that the evidence coming from those sources is different from what the committee report is perhaps concluding. It clearly runs roughshod over those. But perhaps it is more important that the report concluded on November 1, some five weeks ago, and that it wants government to respond in a comprehensive manner.

That is what the parliamentary reform package that our government brought in, in 1985, was designed to do. It was designed to give committees the power to conduct the investigations of their choice, to report to this House and to compel government through the rules to respond within a period of 150 days.

All that is legitimate and all that is appropriate. What is not appropriate, I believe, is that members are forced to stand in this House in December, five or six weeks after the report was presented to the House, and debate for two hours the subject matter of the report.