

*Public Service Performance*

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** My hon. friend from Vancouver-Kingsway wants me to say "fatherhood". Perhaps I should say "parenthood".

**An hon. Member:** Right on.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I am trying to think of some way to mention the fact that I became a grandfather again last night.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** When it is number five, one can take it without too much loss of calm.

It is true that we all want to see efficiency in the public service and anything that can be done to improve that efficiency should, and does, have the support of the House of Commons. I think the first statement I want to make is that I do not want it to be thought, when we talk about improving the efficiency of the public service, that there is an implication that there is on our part any lack of confidence in the efficiency of those who now serve us in the public service of Canada.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Like the hon. member who preceded me, I express the hope that this new concept of operational performance measurement will not simply result in the addition of more public servants which might, in turn, call for additional public servants to check on what they are doing. Even so, I support the proposition that an effort should be made to measure the efficiency with which we are served by our public service.

I cannot help but recall that I belong to the generation that was brought up on the wonders of efficiency experts. About all that has happened is that instead of calling them efficiency experts we now call them operational performance managers. In my day there were various jokes about efficiency experts. I will not try to tell any of those jokes to the House at the moment because I also recall that I knew a great many persons in the thirties who lost their jobs because efficiency experts went into plants, offices and factories and decided that the best way to put those plants, offices or factories on a better basis was to dismiss all those persons over a certain age. In fact, it was because that happened to certain persons whom I knew that I went into politics and am here today.

The next thing I want to say about this statement is that when it comes to the dilemma the minister referred to near the end of his remarks about the hard choice that might have to be made between further reductions in cost and the provision of service, I hope the government will not make the kind of mistake that could result in false economy, that is, by simply trying to save more money because efficiency experts or operational performance managers decide that a number of people should be fired, with the result that poorer service is given to the people of Canada. That, in the end, will not save

[Mrs. Holt.]

money, let alone give a good name to the public service of this country.

It is important to have efficiency and to have things done according to the rule and the book, but I should like to suggest that there are times in dealing with people—and most of what the public service does is in relation to people—when sensitivity, understanding and compassion are more important than competence. So let us go for this approach and measure efficiency of our public servants, but let us not forget the fact that what we are dealing with is a human operation. The main purpose of everything done by the government and by the public service of Canada is to make life better for the persons who make up the population of this country. Let us keep the operation on that basis.

● (1550)

In that connection there is something else I would like to say. I hope the minister will not mind my saying it. I know, from personal conversations with the President of the Treasury Board, that he agrees with me on this. I think the time has come when the government and we in parliament should do a little more defending of the public servants of this country. I am annoyed with the one and two-page advertisements which have appeared in some of our newspapers denigrating public servants and making out that they are a pampered lot who get benefits and privileges not available to other persons. When I think of the money it costs to run those kinds of advertisements, I wonder where that money comes from. I think there are times when we ought to take a moment—and I am doing it right now—to say that those who are in the public service of this country are workers just like the workers back home in our constituencies, and we should not treat them as whipping-boys and blame them because things do not go as they ought to.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I suggest that for all the troubles and difficulties we have, none of us in this place could serve our constituents by trying to solve their problems if there were not, in addition to the ministers—and sometimes in spite of them—public servants in the departments who deal with the problems we present to them. I wish the minister or the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich had said it, but since they did not I can be the first to say that this is an occasion when we ought to be saying strong and congratulatory things to the public servants who serve the government and the people of Canada. That would be one way to improve performance and efficiency, and I have the notion that that would be an even better way than the econometric proposition which is put before us in these documents which are so difficult to read.

Mr. Speaker, you will not be surprised if I say this, and if I dwell on it too long you will call me to order—and I see you are ready to do so—but I suggest that if we would pay a little more attention to the pension rights of public servants, to what happens to their widows, and so on, this would improve the