

The Economy

close to my portfolio and responsibility, and is of great interest to me. I will read *Hansard* for any comments by members that I may miss as a result of a few minutes' absence from the House.

So far, I am a little bit disappointed in the lack of specific suggestions by the Leader of the Opposition, the New Democratic Party and, indeed, the Social Credit party. Perhaps I should have a little patience. Maybe in the course of debate there will be something we can get our teeth into.

Mr. Crouse: Mr. Speaker, before the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) resumes his seat, I wonder if he would accept a question.

Mr. Andras: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Crouse: When the President of the Treasury Board referred to the speech made by W. Earle McLaughlin, chairman and chief executive officer of the Royal Bank of Canada, it was fortuitous that I was reading the same speech. The title of the speech is "There is a Bright Side". The minister quoted from page 1. I flip over to page 2, and there I read as follows:

Now I must admit that 1978 is not shaping up as the greatest year in economic terms. We will be fortunate to achieve real growth of more than 3½ or 4 per cent. However, inflation—that corrosive cancer on the market system—will continue at an unacceptable level. That is simply intolerable. Nothing will destroy investment, growth prospects, or rising living standards faster than continuing inflation.

Does the President of the Treasury Board agree with those remarks by Mr. McLaughlin?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that inflation is insidious and has to be fought.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Like the government.

Mr. Andras: By every government, and all institutions in the private sectors, unions and so on. I have no disagreement fundamentally, but those two or three comments really do not indicate what the Leader of the Opposition was saying about gloom and doom, that investment is leaving the country and everything has gone to hell. That does not relate to the more optimistic observation of the Chairman of the Royal Bank.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, there are only one or two observations that can be made with regard to the intervention of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras). One thing was obvious to anyone here this afternoon, or to anyone who has been following the activities of this government in recent years. The minister spend 20 minutes, more or less, making his comments, but like his tired and weary colleagues, he failed to say anything concrete.

The minister's intervention was tired, almost apologetic. It is not acceptable to the people of this country. The sooner they wake up and realize that, the better they will be.

Following the return of those on this great cross country tour to promote policy sessions of the government and the Liberal party, I hope the President of the Treasury Board will

[Mr. Andras.]

heed the advice of the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell) and the president of his party, the distinguished Senator from Nova Scotia. They have suggested that one current theme is that this government is too big, that it must be reduced in size.

With regard to my colleagues to the left, their interest and concern in the subject matter of the motion are such that they did not even bother to deal with it this afternoon.

I intend to follow very closely on the suggestion put forward by my leader with regard to "sunset laws". One particular aspect of it requires our wholehearted concern.

It has been indicated that this government has grown at an alarming rate in recent years. Governments, agencies and departments grow. They do not have a natural life. They do not come to an end. We have no mechanism or capacity to determine whether their programs continue to be justified, or whether they should be amended to bring them more into line with the purposes and requirements of the present time. In fact most of them seem to acquire a life of their own. They grow on themselves.

● (1702)

My leader has suggested a unique and promising approach, an approach by way of "sunset laws" which is currently being used in the United States—the Congress is actively considering it along with about 24 of the states. The concept involves the setting of fixed dates for the termination of programs in order to bring about a full-scale review and oblige a decision to be made one way or another. If the agencies and programs concerned are serving the purpose for which they were created, their operations could be extended by a positive resolution. If they were deemed to be no longer useful or necessary they could be modified or allowed to lapse.

"Sunset legislation" is only one method by which legislatures can assess the effectiveness of their past endeavours and eliminate programs which are ineffective or unnecessary, while undertaking new initiatives suited to the times and circumstances. It is only one way of revising priorities and allocating scarce dollars and human resources in a manner more consistent with the need.

There appear to be three measures central to the concept. First, there is provision for a mandatory review. Legislation would contain a termination provision under which the House would be obliged to reconsider and reorganize programs, in default of which they would terminate. This places the onus on supporters of programs to justify their continued existence rather than requiring opponents of programs to put forward reasons for their discontinuance.

The second approach is through a budgetary process. The legislation tends to focus on the funding of a program or agency rather than on the act establishing it. The "sunset" provision terminates the funding authority, leaving the laws and regulations unaffected. Thus a program can be re-established or continued without the need to create new legislation.