



REFERENCE PAPERS

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THE TREASURY BOARD OF CANADA *

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In this paper I intend to approach the subject on the assumptions that the Members of the Institute will be most concerned with the operations of the Treasury Board as they are carried out today and that it would be helpful if the Treasury Board were first placed in the context of the other control agencies of the Federal Government.

In attempting to put this organ of government into its proper context, I should first like to speak briefly about the other coordinating and controlling agencies of the federal service. On the level of direct and immediate responsibility, the Cabinet is, of course, the body which formulates the policies and determines the functions that are to be carried out subject always to the authority of Parliament and, ultimately, the country. This task it executes in the light of the problems that impinge upon it from outside and those that emerge through the operation of the government departments and agencies from time to time, with whatever analytical assistance from their departmental staffs is required by the several Ministers. At this level the secretariat of the Cabinet, or Privy Council Office, acts as the medium through which memoranda to be considered by the Cabinet are circulated to the various Ministers. Its members perform the duties of secretary to many of the more important official-level committees. This office thus ensures that all Ministers, and, in particular, the Prime Minister who has no other department, are informed of the issues to be discussed.

As most of you will be aware, the Cabinet is an informal body unrecognized by the law. Its meetings provide a forum wherein broad policy issues can be thrashed out by the group, deriving its power from the support of Parliament, which is in a position to make its decisions effective. I should perhaps add here that the formal body corresponding to the Cabinet is the Committee of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, the membership of which is the same as that of the Cabinet. The Governor General, acting on the advice of his Council, constitutes the Governor in Council, that is, the Crown. This body exercises the prerogative and such regulatory powers as are conferred upon it by statute. Its decisions take the form of Orders in Council. The staff is provided from the Privy Council Office.

It is probably fair to say that a substantial majority of the issues that come up for decision by the Cabinet involve expenditure at some time or other or involve a contingent liability. Therefore, this same substantial majority of policy issues are of direct concern to the Minister of Finance and his department. In order to be in the position to assist the Minister in the wide variety of issues in which he is concerned at this stage, that

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