

Government Expenditure

the quality of the studies conducted by evaluation units in each Department could still be upgraded and improved. All this activity known as program evaluation has involved more resources from Treasury Board and more public servants working in these units. They have been praised for what they are doing, but there is still room for improvement.

What is done with all their work? This is where I come down to the evaluation from the point of view of Parliament itself. We know that Cabinet gains a great deal from the work of these evaluation units. It assists them in the design of new programs, doing away with programs which no longer serve a purpose whenever that happens.

Mr. Nickerson: When have they ever done that?

Mr. Penner: That is a good question. It seems to me that they could make better use of these program evaluations, especially in the latter exercise. However, here is where I come to my problem. The problem I have in assessing the work of these program evaluation units is that officials who appear before parliamentary committees will not share with us the results of their work. Why will they not take us into their confidence so that we can draw our own conclusions on how good a job they have done? Then we could stand in the House and make recommendations to the Government or say that a program is no longer serving the needs for which it was designed or that a program ought to be changed or changed more quickly.

The problem of parliamentarians in committee is that when officials appear before us, they are really unwilling to share with us in a clear, concise way what they have discovered. Public money has made the evaluation possible. The evaluation can be used by the Government and by Cabinet. The evaluation can be used by the Government and by Cabinet. Why should parliamentarians be unable to use it? Always when we call for this kind of information, when we would like to be taken into the confidence of the officials and know what conclusions they have reached, they plead with us to go through the Freedom of Information Act to obtain it. They hedge and they draw back, or they give long answers which tend to confuse parliamentarians and the committee. This frustration which we now have in dealing with the Estimates and in working with officials in committee has led the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn) to say that we need another committee, a more powerful and more sweeping committee, to undertake this task. If we had more efficient work in the existing standing committees, if more hard information were provided to us, we could do a good job and we would not need this super expenditure oversight committee recommended by the Hon. Member in his motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Jim Schroder (Guelph): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to make a few comments on this motion. I, like my colleagues, find much in this motion which is attractive. However, the implementation of the workings of

this committee would in a sense be redundant if we made better use of the instruments that are already in place in the House to cope with various situations.

We should look at what the Government is trying to do with respect to strengthening public administration and accountability. This is extremely important in terms of the expenditures and the fact that we expect to obtain the very most for what we spend.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but we have reached six o'clock.

● (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 45 deemed to have been moved.

INDIAN AFFAIRS—TABLING OF LEGISLATION TO REMOVE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN. (B) POSITION OF MINISTER

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, on April 30 last I appealed to both the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Erola) to give priority to the pending legislation which would repeal Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act which discriminates against Indian Women.

Section 12(1)(b) deprives Indian women who marry non-Indians and also their children of Indian status. In contrast, non-Indian wives of status Indians and their children gain Indian status. This provision, which was imposed on Indian communities by the white man's Indian Act, is clearly unfair and discriminatory. It is up to the Government of Canada to remove this discriminatory section which it imposed and which is contrary to our new Charter of Rights. This should be dealt with separately from the question of self-government.

In response to my question, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women agreed that the amendments to the Indian Act must come first and that this Bill should be dealt with separately from the self-government legislation. I urge her to continue to advocate this plan in Cabinet. I am sure that women parliamentarians of all Parties, who joined forces before to oppose Section 12(1)(b), will support her in working toward this priority.

The NDP strongly supports the concept of self-government for Indian peoples. The present patriarchal system must end. Self-government is long overdue. Surely, however, Indian women who lost their status as a result of non-Indian legislation should have the right to participate in this self-government process.