

*Routine Proceedings*

to people who are conscious of agricultural development. It is information relative to the Estimates.

In 1980 when the Part IIIs were first brought in I was on the Public Accounts Committee. The members of the committee and the House had hoped that the Part IIIs of the Estimates would put before the people of Canada and Parliament in concise, practical and straightforward terms the kind of information which would allow Parliament to know exactly how the money estimated would be spent. The Part IIIs for each department and for each agency were to give that kind of information to the people of Canada and to this House.

• (1250)

The committee expressed some concern and made some specific recommendations regarding the Part IIIs. Although we at the time were dealing with the Part IIIs relative to agriculture, this terminology, these concerns, these recommendations could be taken to heart by almost every agency and every department that presently produces Part IIIs, which is every department and every agency in the government.

Those Part IIIs, when they came out, fulfilled the requirement to a certain extent. As the people within the departments and the agencies became more used to writing them and found that they were being used to look deeper into the operations of the department or the agency, they had a tendency to write a little more obliquely. Consequently, it was to the point where the committee felt that Part IIIs, particularly these agricultural Part IIIs, did not give the kind of information which we should expect them to have.

The committee presented its twelfth report which was tabled on December 17, 1981, in the Thirty-second Parliament. A motion for concurrence in that report was brought forward and passed by this House. At that time the Public Accounts Committee noted the need to provide procedures to ensure that the integrity, accuracy and consistency of information in Part IIIs was preserved and maintained.

In the same report the committee recognized the role of the Comptroller General in responding to these concerns. As you will know, Mr. Speaker, the Part IIIs are not the responsibility of the Auditor General but

basically come from Treasury Board and the Comptroller General. Their quality is vetted by those departments.

The committee was told that more resources had been allocated to the highest priority areas, notably meat hygiene, pesticide control, control of plant and animal diseases and labour relations.

The committee then expected that it should be able to go to the Part IIIs and find out what was in them. That turned out to be almost impossible. What was actually in the Part IIIs was quite often less than was available before. Expenditures that appeared in one year did not appear in the next. Expenditures that were explained vaguely were not clarified in the next year, even if the clarification seemed consistent with understanding.

With the shift of resources there was not a parallel change in clear, consistent data. Expenditures and person-years, together with appropriate explanations in the text, identified the difference between one fiscal year and the second fiscal year. Sometimes we found that the amount put into the Estimates had been reduced considerably or increased considerably with no parallel indication of how those changes were going to affect the operation of the department.

Consequently, the committee made a number of recommendations relative to the Part IIIs. This I suppose to a certain extent is the basis for the belief that concurrence makes a certain amount of sense.

These are the recommendations. First, the committee recommends that the department ensure that the 1990-91 and future Part IIIs of the Estimates contain accurate, clear, consistent and complete information, notably in relation to the resource allocation and program results. We asked the department, in the case of agriculture, to give us information, a written progress report as soon as possible.

We also called upon the Comptroller General to respond to the problems raised by the committee and the Auditor General with regard to the Part IIIs and the Estimates in 1989-90 and earlier Parts IIIs.

We recommend that the Auditor General assess the responses to recommendations (b) and (c) above and report the findings to the committee.

The process of this committee delved into agriculture very seriously, but it was a process which I think and the committee thinks should be extended to as many departments as possible. This is a direction, I suppose, that we are suggesting be picked up by every department and