

I think all of us feel, as I indicated to Senator Jordan a few moments ago, that the only way we can get real control over the budget is through plans which, although they are subject to change will at least give us some idea of what we will be doing 3, 4, or 5 years in the future. This is the only way we will have a chance to make decisions—to avoid having them made for us by past commitments and obligations.

As to how formal such a presentation should be is a question that we never fully resolved in the budget commission discussions. There was unanimous agreement, if I remember correctly, that such estimates should be prepared for the major programs. As you well know, this is required on most public works projects now, before they are presented to the Congress.

Such estimates must be handled pretty carefully, again to keep your flexibility. For instance, the head of a program must not be given a feeling of great security that his program is there through that whole 5-year period by the fact that you put down some printed digits. It may be a program that, actually, you are hopeful of getting rid of before the 5-year period is up, and you have not fully made up your mind what would succeed, and so forth.

So, there is a question here of how formally you go about making and announcing 5-year projections.

There is also a question of the extent to which you want to put the President on the spot in terms of a set of numbers.

It was suggested in the Budget Commission's report that the need for long-term projections was very great, and if it could not really be done within the Government officially, that perhaps some responsible outside group could undertake such a project, possibly with help from the Budget Bureau staff.

These are some of the thoughts that have gone through my mind recently on this.

But I am terribly impressed with the need for keeping your flexibility as you go on out several years. Regardless of what we may say in criticism of the uncontrollable expenditures concept as being a defeatist or reflecting a defeatist point of view, we have to agree that there are some things that you just can't do anything about within a period of a month, or 2 months, or 4 months; there are more things you can do something about next year because Congress hasn't acted, and there are even more that can be changed in the year beyond that. But proponents of programs have a tendency to try to find ways to lock them in through formal arrangements such as formula grants and contractual commitments. Construction is probably a good example, because it is hard to turn it off once you get it started without being terribly inefficient in many cases. An administrator of a program that is susceptible of being locked in tries to get them locked in; and I suppose you can't blame them for trying.

That is a kind of long-winded answer.

Senator PERCY. Thank you, very much.

Senator PROXMIRE (presiding). Mr. Conable?

Representative CONABLE. Mr. Mayo, I think that we all sympathize with you at this point.

You are in a very specialized field, and you are dealing with a world you never made. You are reviewing someone else's budget.