

*Control of Government Expenditures*

people, we have been charged with being obstructionist, with preventing the government from getting on with its business, even to the extent that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said that those who sit on this side of the House are, as far as he is concerned, nobodies. I can well understand, in view of the actions of the government, that the Prime Minister really believes that.

I have watched the operations of two government programs, Opportunities for Youth and more recently the Local Initiatives Program or LIP. In these two cases the programs have been financed simply by an estimate and without legislative approval or proper guidelines have having been laid down. As a result, people who participate in the programs, have had to wade through yards of red tape. Decisions have been delayed. Decisions are being made in the month of March in relation to programs that were prepared early in the winter and are going to expire in May. A senior citizens' group in the city of Saskatoon asked for some money under the Local Initiatives Program to rebuild an old hall that they had been using for recreational purposes year after year. The hall badly needs remodelling, as well as needing new chairs and furniture. Their application was turned down.

In my constituency I have taken the trouble to write to all organizations that made application for funds to determine whether their applications were accepted or rejected. That was the only way I was able to find out. Certainly you cannot get an up to date reading from the government of what is happening in one's constituency. Last summer I talked to people in my constituency who were taking part in the Opportunities for Youth program. I wrote to all organizations and finally wrote to the minister's office asking for an accounting of what was happening in my constituency and for an evaluation of the program. In effect, the minister said yes, there would be an evaluation of the better projects but not of the whole program. I think that is shameful.

I have before me a letter from Mr. Gray, one of the officials of the senior citizens' group to which I referred. He wrote that he was sorry that their application had been turned down. Then, speaking of the hall, he wrote:—the present hall that the senior citizens have is 80 years of age. I think the same chairs are in the hall. I do not think there is a cushion on any chair in any way whatever . . . It must give the older people a wonderful feeling to know the chairs they are sitting in are the same hard seats that their grandmothers sat on—

This organization has been denied the few thousand dollars it takes to give the senior citizens of Saskatoon a comfortable place in which to enjoy themselves in their old age. The people of that generation built this country. Although the government has money to throw around here and there, causing the *Ottawa Citizen* to call the program a disgrace, none of it is spent on these people.

This morning the Standing Committee on Agriculture held its first meeting. Since I have been in the House, this committee has worked hard examining the estimates and legislation that has come before it. Yet what did the ruling party try to do in that committee this morning? They wanted to pass a bylaw to the effect that there does not even have to be a quorum for the committee to examine witnesses coming before it.

The government does not even want to honour the organizations appearing before committees of this House

[Mr. Gleave.]

with a full attendance of members to ask questions and to hear what they have to say. We spent one hour during our first organizational meeting arguing whether or not there should be a quorum at all times when the committee was sitting. Surely, if a committee is set up it should have a quorum. If it is prepared to sit without a quorum, then I would question whether the committee should be set up at all.

I have been in committees where we have had to fight for information, for the opportunity to hear witnesses and representatives of the farmers from the agricultural communities of Canada give their assessment of what should and should not be done in terms of legislation. As the amendment to the motion says, we must put our committees on a proper basis by providing adequate committee time, space and services and we should consider certain estimates, those of greatest importance, on the floor of the House in committee of the whole. We must remember that we are responsible for spending the taxpayers' money. When we take from those who earn \$10,000 or \$12,000 a year about 30 per cent or 35 per cent of their income in the form of taxation, it is only fair and reasonable to give them the right to know where and how their money is spent.

Although we are spending large amounts on temporary programs, the city of Saskatoon has to plead for money to build a proper and permanent air terminal. This should have been rebuilt last year. The Department of Transport is going to spend the magnificent sum of \$350,000 this year, but what can you do with \$350,000 when what you need is an enlarged air terminal? An enlarged air terminal would be a permanent improvement and very useful to Saskatoon. We do not even have adequate transportation for grain from the Prairies to the west coast. All that is needed to provide this transportation is the money to build more track and boxcars, but this money is not forthcoming.

• (2120)

We need to examine fully and completely, in committee of the whole or in a standing committee, how the taxpayers' money is being spent. We must see that this money does long-term as well as short-term good in providing benefits for Canadians.

**Mr. J. A. Jerome (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Jerome:**—I am a little nervous to be on my feet and facing the august cheering body to which the previous speaker referred without having the usual number of supporters in front of me. I might go astray; however, I will try to stay on the topic we are discussing.

Before embarking on the main body of remarks that I wish to make in this debate, may I say that I cannot help but sympathize with the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), who just spoke, in his appraisal of this morning's proceedings before the Standing Committee on Agriculture. Those of us who were attending and hoping to get on with the business of other committees expected to see a brief organizational meeting of that committee. For myself—and I speak as an urban member—it was the