that we have an aircraft industry, but not so important that we do not pay proper attention to the pensions due to our senior citizens and do not pay proper attention to the money required to finance post-secondary education".

The Government may say that it is the obligation of government to determine these things. Yes, government is absolutely and in final form responsible for the spending which it presents to Parliament. However, government expenditures must be approved by this Parliament. In that regard, this Parliament should have a committee to go over government expenditures so that this Parliament, representing as it does all sides and representing the people of the country, could say to government, "Yes, expenditures are important but here is our priority; this is what we say you should spend the money on first, and this is what we say you should spend the money on second; here is where we fit the $1.2 billion or so you are going to give to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; and here is where we see social housing as against family allowances or child tax credits".

No one can have all the pie, Sir, and all of the ice cream and all of the things one would like to have. In our own families we must determine whether mother gets a new coat and whether that coat is a mink or an ordinary cloth coat. At the present time, the tendency is that expenditures are made up in a budgetary envelope system, and expenditures in those envelopes are allowed to creep up by some sort of a percentage. But there is no priorizing by Parliament between envelopes. There is no determination as to whether we should spend more money on defence and less money on external affairs and foreign aid. The fact is that we spend more on both. Is that the proper priorizing of where we should be going? Surely, it is not good enough to have budgets and Estimates presented to us where every Department receives 5 per cent, 8 per cent or 9 per cent more, and those that really squeak receive 13 per cent or 14 per cent more, but everyone gets more? Surely when revenues are not there to cover expenditures, there must be a situation where Parliament is called in to judge whether CIDA money is more important than housing money, or whether subsidies to the Export Development Corporation are more important than subsidies to some municipality to supply urban transportation.

We cannot have all of these things, and it is up to this Parliament to determine which of these things we can have. Those broad determinations must be made and should be made by a separate committee of the House charged with that concern.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have an opportunity to make a few comments this afternoon on Motion No. 101, which was put forward by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn). I believe that the basis of this motion really relates to government expenditure and deficits. As I listened to the Hon. Member's argument about the idea of having one committee of Parliament which would priorize government spending, I thought back to the two elections of 1979 and 1980. If you recall, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party won the 1979 election. In that election, one of the concepts of that Party, I believe, was that it would lower taxes by some $2 billion, but it would buy new ships for the navy, and it would also grant home owner relief of a couple of billion dollars a year. That is not new because most Parties at election time do make promises which involve the expenditure of money.

The 1980 election, I believe, was very significant—perhaps because it was just nine months after the 1979 election—because, for the first time that I can remember, at least the two major Parties in our country were being very careful not to promise anything which was going to cost very much money. I recall that the Liberal Party promised a $35 a month increase in the guaranteed income supplement, a promise which it kept, but the total expenditure for this was very carefully calculated. I believe that the Conservative Party did the same. That election was significant because everyone was remembering back to the 1979 election and with every promise by both Parties, the news media, and independent observers carefully calculated, exactly how much money was being promised by each Party. Everyone realized that because of the financial straitjacket we were in as a country it would be difficult to keep those promises.

Remembering back to that election makes me conscious of the concern which the Hon. Member has expressed. However, the problem I see with the motion to set up a committee which would be a sort of superduper estimates committee is that it would change our basic parliamentary system. The Government proposes legislation or expenditures. It is up to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) and the Minister involved to prepare a blue book and spending Estimates, and for the Government to set the priorities as it sees them and then propose them to Parliament. Parliament ultimately disposes of these Estimates and decides whether it will accept or reject them.

• (1720)

In our parliamentary system we have a very highly disciplined caucus system. If there is a majority Government, the Estimates are generally carried. If there is a minority Government, such as we had in 1972, very often within eight months or one year the Government may well be defeated, either on its budget or on its spending Estimates. Of course that is a matter of confidence, and so the Government can be defeated. Yet under our system the responsibility for making proposals to Parliament remains with the Government.

The motion which the Hon. Member for Mississauga South proposes is in some ways a very radical motion. It suggests that the House or a committee of the House would somehow have a responsibility in determining exactly what the spending Estimates would be for the Government. Unless we change our whole parliamentary system to one where the House would operate on a congressional system, I believe that this proposal would not be acceptable. It is not really clear to me exactly how that system would work. I suppose we could have a committee which could make recommendations, but it seems