

a wide variety of enterprises in other countries, some with much greater resources at their disposal. Because of the costs of developing new products and the need to protect their interests, most firms will only participate in departmental programs if they have assurance that their affairs will be kept strictly confidential; indeed, there is a confidentiality clause contained in some of the contracts signed between the department and the participating companies.

In respect of dealing with the matter of revealing papers and the adoption of some system for this by the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, I am pointing out some of the shortcomings. As I tried to make clear in my opening comments, it is the responsibility of the political leaders to exercise their responsibility in making decisions and to answer the hon. member or any other member of this House in respect of matters of policy being presented for action. However, if the documents in respect of the planning were circulated among members before the government exercised its responsibility in dealing with our democratic system this surely would undermine the system itself.

● (1730)

I understand that in committee—and it is on record in recent months—the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) has made a very real effort, on several occasions, to bring forward and present every bit of planning and programming material that he felt he could safely make available without jeopardizing long-range planning where there has been a political decision and where private interests, private industry, would not be jeopardized internationally in competing against firms in foreign countries.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, the power to govern must rest with the government. If we come to the point where we roll back the cabinet decision-making process to this House, where this House sits as a cabinet, instead of the government, then it will be a denial of the basis of our democratic system where government must accept responsibility for the decisions it makes.

If we begin to judge before the programs of the civil servants have been brought to a political head and decided upon, then surely we undermine the decisions to be made and we weaken the ability of the opposition to focus its attack on government. If we can talk about or judge, before the fact of a political decision by cabinet, the priorities and directions of a particular program then it may well be that when the cabinet makes its decision it can say, "You cannot blame us entirely; two or three other parties have been involved in this." Moreover, it would place in great jeopardy the morale, and indeed the competence of the civil service if the decisions of civil servants suddenly become the area of criticism rather than the government's choice as to the proper decision being rightfully the area of criticism.

The hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Grier) said in his concluding comments, as I recall them, that less and less information is available, that more and more there is bureaucracy, and that less and less the members of this House have available to them the information they need to carry on and cope with the kind of modern government that we have in the 1970s. I believe that the opposite

#### *Disclosure of Documents*

is true. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make brief reference to a committee of this House which this morning held an in camera meeting. It was the justice committee. The meeting involved the RCMP and a discussion in great detail of several matters of much public concern. The government felt that the members of the committee had the right to know, without revealing matters of security which might place the public in jeopardy. But, Mr. Speaker, what we are discussing now is a different matter, which might jeopardize long-range planning before political decisions are made on programs drawn up by civil servants.

I end as I began, by saying that I cannot deny the principle of freedom of availability of as much information as possible on government activities and planning. But to intrude on long-range forecasts, bring the civil servants into the forefront and deny political responsibility being placed where it should be, would place our system in great jeopardy.

**Mr. H. T. Herbert (Vaudreuil):** Mr. Speaker, it is axiomatic that if next year's resources are to be higher by a certain amount than this year's, expenditures for all purposes taken together can rise by no more than the same amount. It is intuitively obvious that it would be more beneficial for the increase to be distributed unevenly among functions according to the exigencies of the period under review. In other words, expenditures should increase at a faster rate than average for some functional programs, should remain stable in others and should actually be reduced in still others to free funds for higher priority purposes. Consequently, not only should departmental programs be viewed as competing with one another for share of the total resources but each program should be viewed as competing with all other programs belonging to the same or other departments.

A major element of the PPB system, therefore, involves seeking the government's guidance as to priorities to be served in allocating resources. This guidance will be sought in the light of forecasts by the Department of Finance as to the magnitude of the funds likely to be available for the next few years according to specific assumptions as to the rate of growth in the economy, tax rates and the appropriate level of borrowing for budgetary and non-budgetary expenditures, subject of course to any overriding considerations as to the fiscal stance necessary to correct any imbalance in the economy.

The recommendations as to priorities are based on analyses made of information drawn from various sources and, in particular, from departmental program review submissions. It will be obvious that the determination of spending priorities and government policy is closely linked. Consequently, these program forecasts necessarily contain information confidential to government as well as to those private institutions or persons who may be involved in the programs financed by the estimates when these are ultimately presented.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) has appeared before a committee of this House on several occasions this month during examination of the department's estimates. He has endeavoured to answer fully the questions of committee members in relation to the department's programs and related spending. I believe