

of a previous government as an austerity program. I refer, of course, to a government headed by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) when he was in office. I recall at that time how Liberal spokesmen in this chamber labelled the Conservative austerity program as an example of government bungling and mismanagement. I agreed with the Liberal spokesmen at that time with respect of what was done under the Conservative regime. At this time, I must say that these remarks apply equally to the administration which is presently in office.

About a year or so ago when we were discussing the estimates of various departments in committees the suggestion was frankly put forward that the hopes and aspirations of the department involved the development of a program on the basis of a five year period. I thought this was a sound attitude which the government ought to take toward planning and spending programs.

This question I have raised goes far beyond the question of discrimination against the citizens of this community of Courtenay in connection with letter carrier service. It goes to the very heart of rational planning and management on the part of the government. For this reason, I felt I should raise the question with the President of the Treasury Board. It is not good enough for the President of the Treasury Board to tell me that a treasury board ruling merely put a general ceiling on government departmental spending and that it is up to the department itself how it is going to stay within that freeze. I suggest that if we are going to have proper management and proper spending of public funds, it should be done without infringing upon the right of all Canadian citizens to the normal services of the government.

The Minister of Communications pointed out to me that this freeze would reduce the burden on the taxpayers and, incidentally, on the electors who are in my constituency. I submit that whatever the level of government spending, those electors are paying the same kind of taxes as other electors in the country, and therefore they are entitled to equal services under comparable conditions to those obtained by other citizens of the country.

I hope that the spokesman for the President of the Treasury Board can give me some indication as to when the government intends to lift this stupid freeze because I can think of no more irrational way of running the public affairs of the country than to indulge in this kind of unplanned chopping and changing so

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

far as the spending programs of the government are concerned. The Liberal administrations have often tried to give the people of Canada the impression that somehow or other they are businesslike people who know how to manage the affairs of the country. I submit that if this government approaches the planning of the spending programs of this country in the manner that is indicated in this example, the people of Canada should no longer labour under any such illusions. I hope that the spokesman for the President of the Treasury Board can give me some indication that the government is coming to its senses in this respect.

Mr. Yves Forest (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I have been asked by the Minister of Communications and Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) to answer the hon. member's question. It is seldom that the Postmaster General is not here himself to answer such questions.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understood that the parliamentary secretary was speaking for the President of the Treasury Board and not the Minister of Communications.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There is no point of order at this stage of the proceedings.

Mr. Forest: It is the Minister of Communications and Postmaster General who asked me to answer the hon. member's question. I was pointing out that usually the Postmaster General is here, but he could not make it tonight.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, I should like to rise on a question of privilege. I addressed a question to the President of the Treasury Board and I do not want to be answered once again by the Minister of Communications on this subject.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I might point out to the hon. member that the practice at the hour of adjournment is not to accept points of order or questions of privilege.

Mr. Forest: I suppose that the question concerning mail delivery at Courtenay or communities in which the hon. member is interested is answerable by the Post Office Department. I wish to point out that the