

The minister's statement did not escape notice. A former speaker of the House of Commons, the Honourable Marcel Lambert, called it to the attention of the house when he said:

—following the adoption of the throne speech resolution, a ways and means motion was put down, as well as what I call a bootleg motion, to increase the borrowing authority of the Government of Canada. It has been a good smuggling effort on the part of the government.

In other words, Marcel Lambert regarded what was done in 1977 as a bootleg motion or a good smuggling effort on the part of the government.

Later, the present Deputy Prime Minister dealt with this instance. I know that the quotation is becoming a favourite of the Leader of the Government and I am almost deterred by that consideration from reading it. However, I know that some senators have not had an opportunity to read the notable words of the Honourable Eric Nielsen. On February 10, 1982 he referred to the development of the procedure by which borrowing bills are dealt with. He mentioned what was done in 1976-77. Then he went on to mention what was done in 1977. He said that a borrowing authority clause had been included in an income tax bill. He went on to say:

It should be noted that this slipped through without any comment, but it is a very doubtful precedent because the practice was not confirmed by ruling, was not accepted as a definite precedent in your ruling, Madam Speaker, of January 19, 1981, and, most important, it has been superseded by the practice subsequently adopted in the last three administrations.

In other words, the Honourable Eric Nielsen dismissed the 1977 incident as a kind of aberration which, he thought, had slipped through without comment. Actually, as I have mentioned, his colleague, the Honourable Marcel Lambert, had detected what was happening. Mr. Nielsen's point was that since 1977 the request for borrowing authority has been dealt with distinctly and has become a very important part of the financial legislation program of Parliament.

Now, we have to look at the years since then. I do not intend to go through every year in absolute detail. We know what happened in 1978-79, when the government of the day brought in a bill to provide borrowing authority for 1978-79 and 1979-80. The opposition objected and said that this was improper. What happened then? The government of the day decided, regardless of how much face was involved, to drop Part II of that bill. Then in 1979 the Clark government sought borrowing authority for the balance of the fiscal year 1979-80. During the session from 1980 to 1983 seven borrowing bills were introduced. I should like to put before honourable senators the dates of Royal Assent for those bills because they are very revealing. They are as follows: July 17, 1980—well into the fiscal year; April 8, 1981—a week into the fiscal year; June 17, 1982—again, well into the fiscal year; August 4, 1982; November 8, 1982; March 30, 1983; and June 29, 1983.

[Senator Stewart.]

• (1710)

During the 1983-84 parliamentary year, one borrowing bill was introduced. That bill received Royal Assent on April 5, 1984.

Only one of those eight bills contained two parts, one part requesting borrowing authority for the then current fiscal year, and one part for the subsequent fiscal year; that was Bill C-143, which received Royal Assent on March 30, 1983.

In respect of all that legislation, the Progressive Conservative Party, then the official opposition, made very clear what it believed to be the principles that should guide Parliament in dealing with requests by the government for borrowing authority. It is important to be reminded of those principles.

On June 15, 1982, the Honourable Michael Wilson had something to say about this matter. The main estimates for that year had been tabled, and the budget was to be delivered on June 28, about two weeks later. However, Mr. Wilson urged the government to withdraw its bill until after the budget had been brought down. At page 18479 of the House of Commons *Debates* of June 15, 1982, he stated as follows:

—for this minister to come to the House and ask for permission to borrow \$6.6 billion is totally in contempt of Parliament and in contempt of the Canadian people. We are being asked to vote on something when we have no idea what the end result will be.

In other words, he thought that the then Minister of Finance, the Honourable Allan MacEachen, should not come to Parliament to ask for borrowing authority until he could give a specific statement as to the total borrowing requirement for the then current fiscal year.

He had other things to say later on. After the June 28, 1982, budget the government of the day sought authority to borrow \$11 billion for 1982-83, the then current fiscal year. As in the case of the bill now before us, there was a provision that a certain portion of that request—in that case, \$4 billion—would not lapse at the end of 1982-83. What the opposition did at the time was to attack the idea that any part of the borrowing authority for the then current fiscal year should remain valid in the following fiscal year. They argued that March 31 was a real end; that there was a kind of guillotine that dropped at midnight on March 31, and that in no case should borrowing authority be provided by Parliament to the government if that borrowing authority were to extend beyond midnight of March 31 of the fiscal year in which the authority was being requested.

The Right Honourable Joe Clark moved an amendment. He proposed that the motion for the second reading of the bill be amended so that, if carried, the House would have resolved that:

—this House holds the opinion that the granting of an authority for the borrowing of a sum greater than that amount which is required to meet the government's needs to the end of the current fiscal year is objectionable in principle—