

S.O. 75c

the House. One of my hon. friend's points with which I disagree is the fact that—

Mr. Blaikie: Thank God.

Mr. Evans: He says, thank God. I am glad we would both thank the same person.

After six days—and that is how much time will have been spent on the debate on the borrowing authority—one would expect we would have heard the major arguments pro and con the borrowing authority, and that the bill could then go to committee where one or both ministers would appear and important aspects could be studied in depth.

After listening to the majority of the speeches and having read the rest, I am sorry to say that I think the direction given to the government by the members of the opposition has been marginal at best. I think any objective observer would have to say that. As parliamentary secretary I organized this debate on behalf of the minister. I had to ensure that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) and the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Bussi eres) could agree that the opposition had the maximum amount of time to present their views with regard to this particular bill on borrowing authority.

Until today, we had placed two speakers before the House on this debate, the Progressive Conservative Party 18 and the New Democratic Party five. By the time the debate terminates on Monday, as called for in the motion under Standing Order 75c imposed today, it will have lasted six days and then, as I said, the bill will be transmitted to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. When it returns to the House for third reading there will be additional debate. In my opinion, given that kind of flexibility and latitude, and the ability of members of the opposition to make their views known in speeches of some duration, there has been no throttling of debate.

We have listened to the speeches of hon. members opposite, we have monitored the debate closely, we have listened to the objections raised by hon. members, and we have tried to get the sense, in certain cases, of how their remarks were relevant to the question before the House.

We should get something else on the record as well. My hon. friend, the hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill, put his finger on another issue; that is, that the tactic of delay is used, and used effectively, by the opposition. When faced with that kind of tactic, and when certain hon. members opposite say with a smiling face, "We are going to delay until you are forced to use 75c", then I think the kind of rhetoric we have heard today about debate being throttled, and the abuse of Parliament is just that—pure rhetoric.

An hon. Member: Who said it?

Mr. Evans: It is pure rhetoric and I think we all admit it.

An hon. Member: Name the hon. member. No guts.

Mr. Evans: Today the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) indicated dismay that to her mind the government was asking for \$14 billion worth of borrowing authority without a plan. All I have to say to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is that if she were to read the budget she would find that it includes the most comprehensive fiscal structure ever presented to Parliament.

In that fiscal plan are the envelopes which indicate to all hon. members the areas in which government expenditures will take place. In addition to that, the hon. member knows very well that it is from the fiscal plan set out in the budget that the estimates of each department are derived. These give a much more detailed explanation of expenditure plans for the departments. The revenue-raising side of the budget is in the form of the borrowing authority. The size of borrowing authority is clearly indicated in the budget. The fiscal plan is there, and the estimates are there. When the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands says there is no plan, I am sure it is simply because she does not understand the fiscal arrangements of government.

● (2020)

Borrowing authority has traditionally been used as a vehicle for the discussion of a wide range of matters because anything which involves taxation or expenditure can, presumably, be discussed under the heading of borrowing authority. But it seems to me that in future all hon. members should sit down together and ask, in all honesty, if we can focus debate on borrowing authority bills any more tightly than we have with regard to this legislation, previous legislation from this government and, indeed, legislation from the government of hon. gentlemen opposite. The public must be totally confused when it watches television and sees what is going on. It must wonder what in the world this debate is all about. Is it about borrowing authority but we are talking about everything under the sun except the subject of borrowing authority?

Hon. members opposite say we have throttled debate on economic issues. Not only have we not throttled debate on economic issues—in particular, debate on borrowing authority—but we probably have had more debate on economic issues in the last three to four months than in any other Parliament in the history of this country. The budget was brought down in October, and a debate followed that. There were energy bills, and the debate followed them. There was an emergency debate before Christmas which set a record for length of continuous debate. All these were on economic issues. We have just passed an income tax bill. Again there was an economic debate of some length. Finally, we have before us a borrowing authority bill.

I think we have to be realistic. We know for sure that the opposition can and has used the rules to stall and delay. The hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill admitted that tonight by saying that this is a valuable tool of the opposition. When the government faces that kind of situation, when we face a series of legislative initiatives which should be brought forward and when hon. members opposite want very badly to get into