

Borrowing Authority Act

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for the amendment to Bill C-7. I have been in various committees with the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Railton), and I always find his rhetoric interesting, but I think today he reached new levels. He made many statements, but if he had to back them up he would have some difficulty. I am sure that in his professional days he would have been much more successful backing up his diagnoses than he was tonight backing up his statements.

Tonight the hon. member for Welland mused in the same manner as his fearless leader has mused. Hon. members will recall that one New Year's Eve—

Mr. Harquail: Wouldn't you like to have a leader?

Mr. Epp: I have a leader, and you are on the way out, friend. On that New Year's Eve the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) mused along the same lines as the hon. member for Welland tonight. He said that he thought the market economy was not really working very well. Once someone established that, the next step is obvious. If the market economy does not work well, you intervene and nationalize.

The hon. member does not know what all the fuss and bother is about with regard to nationalization, so I will tell him. Through this bill the government initially asked for authority to borrow \$17 billion. Because of opposition to granting authority to borrow \$10 billion next fiscal year, the government was forced to back down. An amendment was introduced to delete that request for \$10 billion in borrowing authority from Bill C-7.

The government now goes forward and makes additional borrowings. For what purpose? It wants to take over a company at a cost of \$1.4 billion. The government has allowed another Crown corporation to buy out a profitable free enterprise carrier, Nordair, despite the objections of almost every province which is served by Nordair. I see that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is in the House tonight. The provinces involved are concerned that if Nordair is vulnerable, who is next and will there be regional carriers? I believe that there are a number of hon. members opposite who are totally convinced, even though it is not very popular at this time, that the market economy does not work and that it is up to them to intervene in the market economy.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) would want to be clear about the facts. The fact is that this request for borrowing authority has nothing whatsoever to do with Petro-Canada's potential to buy this, that or any other company. The current proposal of Petro-Canada—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp).

● (2142)

Mr. Epp: The point that is important is that the government wants to intervene, and it is flirting with the Canadian public when it says: "We must allow the private sector to do more."

[Mr. Railton.]

It is the musing of last August 1 when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said he would allow the private sector to do more, that he would not intervene. But that is a slight retreat from his goal and his plan. Mentally and philosophically he has always been an interventionist. He has wanted to control the lives of Canadians and control the market economy. There is a wide body of people in Canada who are now totally convinced that given half the chance, the Prime Minister would intervene even more in the market economy if the politics of it were such that he would not lose at the polls.

All we have to look at is the last ten years and the further intervention by this government in the marketplace. Just take Nordair and Petro-Can as examples. But when anyone criticizes this intervention, hon. members opposite wrap themselves in the Canadian flag and equate any criticism of the Liberal government and of the Prime Minister with criticism of Canada. It is not criticism of Canada that we are putting forward tonight; it is criticism of the leadership of this government and of the economic malaise to which they have brought this country.

No matter how they trumpet and bray from the other side, the Canadian public has finally seen through this crew. Government members opposite are now facing more than anything else a credibility gap, first of all with the Canadian people, and secondly with the international community which does not believe what the government are saying. Let us go back to price and wage controls. Did they support wage and price controls in the 1974 election campaign?

Mr. Béchard: No.

Mr. Epp: Of course they did not. Six months later, on October 14, did they support it? Of course they supported it then, because suddenly the shoe was on the other foot. And that is where the credibility gap started for this government.

Despite the Prime Minister's protestations that he will allow the private market system to work, his actions in the last two weeks have proven again that this is so much rhetoric and that his real philosophical bent is toward intervention. Given half a chance, that is what he will continue to do. No member on the other side of the House can refute what I am saying and defend the Prime Minister. No member on the other side can deny that the Prime Minister's first goal is to make the market economy work and that above and beyond that it is his own private and personal goal to control the Canadian economy.

The result is that today in Canada we have a situation where the potential of this country has been frittered away. Canada can be strong, but not with the type of leadership that this government is giving in economic matters. Read all the comments about the economy. What can the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) do on Thursday night? His hands are tied. Why? Because the Prime Minister and the long list of finance ministers who went to their reward in Toronto and in various such spots have put us further into debt.

The hon. member for Welland is right that a national debt can be created, for instance, as an investment toward the future. I agree with him. A national debt has also been created