

Supply

limit of \$400 million. Subsection 2 of this section points out that no portion of the \$400 million may be used in a province in a ratio higher than that province's ratio is to Canadian population figures of 1961. If you apply that formula to this amount, to arrive at the provincial figure you will find a ratio has been used, I suggest, which indicates that the government is attempting by a kind of back-door approach to reactivate a statute which is already on the books and yet it will not openly come to this House with an amendment to this statute, or be candid with regard to what it proposes in the future in respect of the fund for this program. I am particularly disturbed by this approach.

My apprehension was certainly confirmed by the remarks of the hon. member for Ottawa-Centre who spoke before me. He suggested that we should pass the vote and let the civil servants handle the program because they will do a good job. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), when appearing before the committee, agreed that this is a non-budgetary item about which we are talking. I feel we have had too many non-budgetary items in this parliament produced by this government. I know it is very convenient to speak of a net liability in the country and whether we happen to have a deficit or whether we happen to have a surplus. However, I think it is also important that we should look at the total debt position of this country which in 1972 was \$42.7 billion. That was an increase of \$5 billion in one year and an increase of \$15 billion since 1962. I feel that if one analyzes the main reason for such a substantial debt increase in this country one will find it is because of the so-called non-budgetary items, which have been channelled by the Minister of Finance into a Crown corporation or into a special fund such as he wishes to set up here. Certainly in such a case parliament would have very little opportunity to analyze what has happened in respect of such funds.

I feel very disappointed about the fact that neither the Minister of Finance nor the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) happen to be in the House today. Here we are dealing with an item of \$350 million. We say we have no objection to an amount of \$75 million because it is indicated that there is a need for this amount in the current year. However, for the reasons I have given, we do object to having our right to analyze how the government intends to spend the balance of that money taken away from us. We find that at the moment these two ministers do not have the courtesy to even be in the House in order to find out what members of this parliament think about this issue.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre has said we should trust the public servants. There is a parallel situation I would like the hon. member to look into and then perhaps next time he will not be so keen to say that. I suggest the Minister of Finance who is proposing this vote today is certainly cognizant of what is transpiring with regard to certain other non-budgetary items which this parliament has very little opportunity to examine. For example, the Minister of Finance has indicated he feels may be spent in the current year something in the order of \$75 million on behalf of winter works activities in the provincial or municipal field. I would point out that the vote refers to December 6. I believe it is interesting to remember that under another non-budgetary item the Export Develop-

ment Corporation has spent, with no sanction from this Parliament, \$90 million since December 7, including \$26.5 million in the form of a loan to Brascan Limited of Toronto in respect of one of its subsidiaries in Brazil.

I would also point out that that same corporation has offers outstanding to three companies in Brazil which, if accepted by those companies, would mean that we are committed to another \$75 million in long-term loans to Brazil. Those offers, for example, are good until June 30, 1973. But, when we take a look at this vote it is evident that they must be accepted by May 31. I suggest that not only has something in the order of \$100 million been committed since December 7 to Brazil, but that through offers to five companies in Mexico there is an amount of \$95 million outstanding in the program again until June 30. It is my understanding that this corporation alone, in a non-budgetary sense, has some \$360 million outstanding until June 30 at least of this coming year. This is the situation in spite of the fact that parliament in its wisdom, placed a ceiling on the maximum amount that the Export Development corporation could lend of \$850 million. I emphasize that that ceiling has already been violated, and I feel that we in this House must insist that a minimum of non-budgetary items be tolerated.

We owe it to the people of Canada to manage their funds better. I suggest it would be wrong to allow this vote to go through which would empower the government to get at another \$350 million in the terms suggested. When the government has done this type of thing in respect of non-budgetary situations connected with the Export Development Corporation, I do not feel we should expect it will not do things we would find unacceptable in connection with this \$350 million fund. That is why I believe our suggestion is reasonable that the amount of \$75 million might be approved which the government says it intends to spend in the current year. In fact, I would suggest it is not only reasonable, but it is extremely difficult to identify the rationale behind any other suggestion.

If we look at the estimates we are discussing, we find that the title reads "For the fiscal year ending March 31, 1973". Why should there be any suggestion that in those estimates we would find amounts for 1974 and for 1975. Surely, that is most irrational. The suggestion that "we are just lending now and you are going to get your chance later" is a very poor answer because the fact is that the money will be expended and all that this parliament could do would be to meet some kind of a pressure play at that point, much as has happened with respect to the unemployment insurance fund.

• (1600)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired. He can only continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Blais: Would the hon. member permit a question at this time? The hon. member made quite a to-do about the question of civil servants handling all those funds. I recall the evidence of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner)