

● (1630)

It is almost inconceivable what we are being asked to do. How can any Member of the House, certainly any Opposition Member, return to his or her constituency and answer as to why the Government was just given authority to borrow \$14 billion? How could we reply to such a question? How will Liberal backbenchers reply to their constituents when asked why they gave the Government the authority to borrow and spend \$14 billion? When they are asked what it was for, what will they say? They are not interested and they do not care. Their excuse will be, "I am sorry, but I was not in the House; I was back home in my constituency". We are entitled to know before we pass this Bill what the funds will be used for.

On February 17, 1983, the Minister of Finance informed the House that as of February 11 a total of \$20.6 billion of borrowing authority had been used of the \$21 billion authorized. Now the Minister is asking us to authorize a further \$5 billion immediately and another \$14 billion to be spent by next summer. The House will not be in recess for that long, the Government does not need that \$14 billion now. If it does, we would like to know why. It may well be that the net deficit is far larger than the Minister of Finance is prepared to tell us.

This is the third time the Liberal Government has come before the House in the past year for supplementary borrowing authority. First, there was Bill C-111 for \$6.6 billion; then there was Bill C-125 for \$7 billion; then Bill C-128 for \$4 billion. They have all been passed. The Opposition has kept hammering at the Government to stop increasing the Government debt. Speaker after speaker has pointed out today that we have not obtained any kind of answer or explanation from the Government.

I remember in 1980 when I was first elected to the House of Commons. At that time the Liberal Government had left a deficit running of \$10 billion. I could not comprehend that figure at that time, and I remember discussing it with my constituents. They could not understand it either. I said that surely this was the height of irresponsibility which the Government would show. It is not even three years, and the deficit has almost tripled; it is now \$27.6 billion or \$26.9 billion. In any event, it will be \$30 billion the next time the Minister opens his mouth.

That has to be an irresponsibility which no Government in the western world has exercised before. The Government has attempted to disguise the increases in the borrowing authority in a variety of ways. Every time it asks for a larger amount, it expects the House to pass without question various borrowing Bills. Canadians are very much aware of the delinquent fiscal policies and economic mismanagement of successive Liberal Governments since 1968 which have thrust the country into a recession, I would say almost a depression. Certainly it is a recession of which we have not seen the likes since the 1930s. As many speakers have indicated, Canada's economic decline is the worst of the 24 OECD countries. By the third quarter of 1982, Canadian manufacturers were operating at the lowest level of capacity and utilization since records were first kept in 1961.

Borrowing Authority

I see Mr. Speaker is motioning that my time is up. I might say that my time is not up. It is the Liberal Government's and the Liberal Party's time that is up. As soon as Canadians get an opportunity, they will show them that their time is up.

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to follow an act like the one of the Hon. Member for Okanagan North (Mr. Dantzer).

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Try.

Mr. Halliday: Indeed I will. I have in my hand Bill C-143. As the Hon. Member for Okanagan North said, it is a Bill of less than two pages. It is interesting because it is somewhat different from the usual supplementary borrowing authority Bills which come before us, in as much as it is divided into two parts. We would not be surprised if it contained only one part, because we are in the habit of receiving such Bills in the past where we were expected to provide some borrowing authority. Having only a few weeks to go to the end of the current fiscal year, we would expect, as in the past, that the Government would need some more money. Indeed it does. It needs another \$5 billion to finish out this fiscal year which ends on March 31. It would not surprise us to have that particular part of the Bill to deal with, but the Government has surprised us this time. As the Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) said earlier this afternoon, the Government has given us a two-part Bill. The vicious and offensive part about it is that the Government has also probably gone into six months of the next fiscal year and is seeking borrowing authority for another \$14 billion. The worst part of it all is that the Government has completely refused to give any explanation of why it needs that extra money. It would be very repetitive to go through some of the analogies. The Hon. Member for Okanagan North did an excellent job of bringing to your attention, Mr. Speaker, how you would handle your grandchildren if they were to come to you and ask for a significantly large sum of money. Knowing you as I do, I am sure you would not handle them in the way the Government is expecting us to handle its request for \$14 billion for the next fiscal year.

As I said, it is a two-page Bill. It is very simple, but it has to be contrasted with the 295-page Bill which we were debating yesterday and have been for some time. It was a Bill to amend the Income Tax Act; it was not the Income Tax Act itself. The Government has found ways and means of digging into the purses of every Canadian to extract a little more money here and there from Canadians who have justly and rightly earned the money. It takes some 295 pages for it to get all the money it can, but when it comes to explaining how it will spend the money, it is so arrogant that it does it in a page and three-quarters. The Government expects the Opposition to sit back and accept it.

There was a time in parliamentary history when this could not have happened. Some of my colleagues go back further than I and can probably remember days when it would have been very difficult for a Government to put through such a Bill because it would have been stymied in the House until Members were told something about it. The Bill would not have