

Borrowing Authority Act

From this definition it follows that accountability will be direct and effective where information is reliable and meaningful. For reasons I have set out in detail in five successive annual reports to the House of Commons, it is clear that neither of these latter adjectives applies to the financial information Parliament now receives.

Had this government been more open and forthcoming in terms of information as to what it intends to do with this \$12 billion, we on this side would have been much happier to see the passage of this bill come about very quickly. If the parliamentary secretary was really interested in getting on with the business of the House—important business, he called it, by implication saying this bill is not important business—he would have tried to see that the information would be forthcoming. I am sure we would not then be showing as much concern with this bill as we are at present.

I wish to make one other point before concluding my remarks and making way for as many more speakers on this side of the House as possible. On Tuesday afternoon the Minister of State, Small Businesses (Mr. Lapointe) talked in this House about the metric conversion process. During that debate we were given information to the effect that the metric committee that is forcibly converting this country to metric has a budget of something like \$27 million. In his remarks the minister made the point that the plastics industry and the petroleum industry were converting very successfully. He sadly neglected to say whether anyone was concerned about people.

My point is simply this. The minister would be exercising his responsibility to small business a lot better if he had seen that some of the \$27 million that will be wasted by the commission to convert this country to metric was made available to the small business section of his department in order to assist small businesses. Conversion to metric will cause a lot of problems and additional expense to small business. Small business would be much better served by the minister had he shown some concern about the people involved in the conversion process and tried to ensure that some of the \$27 million presently budgeted to the Metric Commission was made available to small business.

There are several other points I should make, but my main concern is that opposition members should have complete information on what the government plans to do with this \$12 billion before we are forced into giving the government a blank cheque to borrow vast sums of money on behalf of our constituents.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Gimaiel (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to rise this afternoon in this chamber on a matter of such controversy at this point, namely Bill C-30, and as I do I am almost in a nervous shock. Because when the man in the street arrived here as a new member of Parliament, he gets the feeling, especially under a government that gives so many services as this government has been giving Canadians for years, that such services clearly require funds, and that during difficult periods such as we are now going through, the government must borrow.

We had a notion, when the government announced that borrowing would be needed, that these loans would proceed as a matter of routine and everyone would be in agreement here, because if services are given to Canadians it is because members of Parliament passed legislation to help develop the Canadian population. My state of shock comes from the realization that some members here are trying to prevent the Government of Canada from borrowing to meet its commitments to the Canadian people or to defer the process. This is something that as a man in the street I have difficulty in realizing. But as every other member of Parliament, I am so much more aware of the fact that I represent some 80,000 constituents.

The debate has been going on for quite some time. I heard all sorts of things. Some hon. members suggested at some points that this government spent too much, expenditures had to be cut, but a few minutes later they were going on record to suggest that millions should be invested in their constituencies. The rationale of this I never could understand. Others have said that this government is asking for a blank cheque of \$12 billion. It is unbelievable that some people can say such inept things to the people. If my memory serves me well a blank cheque is a cheque on which there is no figure and which is signed by the person who is the holder of the bank account. It is certainly not so. There is a very definite figure mentioned in Bill C-30, which represents the borrowing authority asked in it.

Furthermore, we know perfectly well for what purpose those expenditures will be made. Those who do not know just have to review all existing Canadian legislation and they will find there all the expenditures made by the Government of Canada within a year. They are all there and you know it full well.

Another matter that has been frequently raised is the fact that, apparently, the government has not introduced a budget before it requested that borrowing authority. Apparently, this has happened before and anyway I remember very well that the Minister of Finance mentioned on April 21 what would be the expenditures of our country for the coming month. But worse still is that the people who refuse today to give to the Government of Canada the borrowing powers that will enable it to administer our country are the same who after their election as a government on May 22, 1979, took seven months before presenting their budget.

I remember very well, I was in Lac Saint-Jean at the time and I had been listening to the evening news on TV. On two occasions, we saw the then prime minister (Mr. Clark) who, by the way, was not prime minister for too long, go to Banff with his cabinet. Jasper Park, Lake Louise, Banff are very beautiful. Had they visited Lac Saint-Jean at least once they might have seen the marvellous sunset or else they could have seen the most beautiful and the deepest fjord in the world, the one which goes farthest inland, the Saguenay. But this did not happen. Watching all this, we had the impression that that