

Borrowing Authority

in Guelph, which does some unique work, is being closed. We have seen a \$9.6 million cut from the social housing program. This is from a Government which says that it is concerned with the quality of life for Canadians.

The motto for students seems to be "wait until spring". The existing student programs that create jobs for students during the summer are gone. We are told that there will be a new program to replace it but we are not sure when that will be.

The record of the Government thus far is disturbing. In the face of that record, it is not possible for us to agree lightly to giving a blank cheque to the Government to do more of the same. We must have our questions answered about the intent of the Government in many areas and we certainly must have the discrepancy in the figures explained by the Department of Finance.

Mr. McInnes: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member indicated that in her learned opinion, which I respect, she considered that this Government has been incompetent in the two months it has been in office. Would she give the particulars on which she bases that statement?

Miss Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I have already listed many examples of what I consider incompetence, because the Government attacks the quality of life of Canadians without producing the savings and costs that it claims will result.

However, I am delighted to have the opportunity to add a further example. It is the matter of the cancellation of the census. As a result of this cancellation, the Government has eliminated more than 500 person years of employment. It has eliminated a source of data which is essential to the shared programs legislation. In fact, census data is built right into the formula for the equalization Act. Two provinces, and possibly a third, have a constitutional requirement for a census. Therefore, the Government will have to do a partial census, which makes the figure which it gives us as a saving in the census also suspect.

Furthermore, small businesses which rely on census data will be deprived of that information. They will have to find their own money to do these studies in some way. Big business already has in-house facilities and will not suffer.

When one considers the equalization payments which constitute such a large part of the Government's expenditures, I do not believe that it knew what it was doing when it wiped out the census. Without the proper data, how is it possible to plan schools, manpower training and transfers to the provinces to support these programs? I do not believe the Government knew what it was doing when it axed the census. I am glad to see the Prime Minister has in fact admitted that and is prepared to reinstate it.

● (1650)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson). I found her speech to be most informative. I have a general question for her. the

Hon. Member for Trinity was here when the finance critic for the Liberal Party introduced an amendment to the motion we are debating condemning the Government for bringing to the House a Bill requesting borrowing authority into the next fiscal year. Can the Hon. Member explain how this Bill, making that request, differed from the Bill her government brought in on a number of occasions which, to my recollection, did exactly the same thing?

Miss Nicholson (Trinity): Perhaps the Hon. Member was not here when I began my remarks, Mr. Speaker, because I explained that it was a matter of a number of factors coming together. There is the request for moneys over two years. Added to that there is the fact that this is a new government. We have not had a budget. We had an economic statement bootlegged into the debate on the Speech from the Throne, which deprived us of the normal opportunity for debate. It appears now that we are unlikely to have a budget before May or June.

Another factor was the discrepancy between the figures provided by the Department of Finance to our government a couple of months ago and to this Government. I said the Department of Finance officials must explain those discrepancies. The other fact I mentioned as also being unusual is that Ministers of the Crown themselves have admitted that some of the numbers are inaccurate. I think there we have a number of factors over and above the request for a two-year period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Papproski): If there are no more questions or comments, I would like to recognize the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn).

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, I am very used to speaking on borrowing authority Bills.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blenkarn: This is the first time I have spoken on a borrowing authority Bill from this side of the House. It is certainly a different feeling. I am very much opposed to the massive government borrowing that we have in this Bill. I have always been opposed to that massive government borrowing. I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) is opposed to massive government borrowing. I know the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) is opposed to that kind of borrowing. Indeed, I know the entire side here is opposed to it, although I am not at all sure of the attitudes of members of the New Democratic Party, nor am I sure of the attitudes of members of the Liberal Party. Everywhere we go and every time we hear from them, they say: "You can't cut that out. You can't drop that. My goodness gracious, deficit financing is fine".

Mr. Deans: Borrow more.

Mr. Blenkarn: Yes, borrow more, they say, because we must have more.

Mr. Deans: Don't forget there is a question period after this.