

Borrowing Authority

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, today is the first occasion I have had to speak in the House since the recent election. I have spent the last 10 and a half weeks as the Government's representative to the United Nations where a debate on social security centers on the fact that millions of people throughout the world are starving because of drought in Africa. Hundreds of thousands of people are freezing because of lack of clothing and shelter. Having just returned from that 10-week experience, I found it interesting to listen to the Canadian debate today on issues which are in the same direction but not of the same quantity. I hope that Members of the House and Canadians who happen to be watching today will open their hearts and wallets to those starving people around the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, it is like coming back to a strange planet. I think the Liberal and New Democratic Parties are saying to the House that the present system is O.K. Those members of the Opposition who have sat with me on committee over the last five and a half years and listened to testimony surely realize that the present situation is not O.K. In Canada today a child living in a family which has an income of \$10,000 or less per year receives \$15 more per month than a child living in a family which makes \$45,000 a year. If we can, through better management and better systems, double the difference to that poor segment of society, to those children born to families where the food, clothing, shelter and educational opportunity are inadequate, that is what a consultation process is all about and that is what the Government stands behind. It stands behind finding ways to produce more money for that segment of society where it is really needed. The consultation process concerns finding ways to produce more money for that segment of society where it is really needed. I stand four square for that principle and my Party stands four square for that principle as well.

● (1550)

Members opposite in the Liberal Party talk about social justice. I spent 60 days knocking on doors in my community of Calgary, Alberta. Two years ago, young people from your ridings were coming to my community to find a job, develop a career and achieve a decent standard of living. This summer, 25 per cent of the office space in Calgary was vacant, 15 per cent of the apartments were vacant, and I met family after family who have not worked for over a year.

That is a result of the policies put in place by the Liberal Party of Canada despite the objections of the Opposition despite the information it had and because of the lack of consultation. It made a mistake that was disastrous and which has forced millions of people to live below the poverty line who had not lived in poverty before. We will avoid those mistakes because we will be involved in the process of consultation.

We will not make those mistakes. If Members opposite read the Auditor General's report they would find that the Liberal Government approved a purchase for the F-18 jetfighter that

will cost \$3.5 billion more than indicated. That amount alone could double assistance to seniors in this country had that one mistake not been made.

I look forward to the debate that will ensue. I now yield the floor to the representative of the NDP.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to end this debate today. I wanted to make two major points in the closing few minutes. If the Government is legitimately concerned about providing more opportunity, more financial support and more social program support for the poor of Canada, rather than seriously considering the tax-back provision which has been discussed in the House and referred to by government Members, I would suggest that we reform our tax system. That would enable us to implement a minimum tax on people in the upper income brackets and to implement a tax system where certain loopholes are closed so that everyone, regardless of economic status, pays his or her fair share of individual and corporate taxes. Therefore, adequate moneys would be available for all the social programs that the Government may wish to provide to the poor of Canada.

I am pleased that the Government has decided to eliminate \$4 billion from this borrowing authority. I suggest it shows a willingness to listen to the arguments from those in the Opposition benches. It has also agreed to introduce the requirements for the borrowing Bill in the next fiscal year within two weeks of the budget being brought down. This opens up a new process that I hope will become a precedent in the years to come. In this way, the Government is able to lay out for the people of Canada its expenditures for the coming year and indicate its revenues and borrowing requirements in a two-week package. It will enable the people of Canada to evaluate more thoroughly the performance of the Government and decide if it is providing the appropriate fiscal management that is so desperately needed in our country.

In closing, since the Government has agreed to eliminate \$4 billion and to provide a two-week introduction period for the next borrowing authority, I believe we really have made progress during the last number of weeks. I applaud government Members for recognizing the wisdom of the suggestions being made by members of the NDP.

In that spirit, I wish to use this opportunity to wish my colleagues, on behalf of our Party, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We have one minute left. The Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria).

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, one minute is not very long. However, I want to point out the contradiction in what the Government is doing. It was elected not to cut social programs but to give the people of this country more. It said that it wanted to give Canadians a better life. That is not what it is doing now.