

that there has probably been rarely seen in this House a farce to equal the farce last night when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) attempted, against the rules and practice of this House, to interrupt the Speech of my hon. friend, the member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert), and impose closure in a way which broke the rules of the House. He was prevented from doing that.

Today, however, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) has come forward to give an indication that he intends to impose closure on a bill which only a few days ago the members of this government itself were actively filibustering. On Friday of last week the debate in this House saw five government members in a row, including three members of the Privy Council, three of their senior members, standing up and seeking to filibuster.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to President of Privy Council on a point of order.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition but he who wants to give us lectures on procedure is precisely making a speech that would belong much more in tomorrow's debate on the motion under Standing Order 75C. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to call him to order and urge him if he wants to participate in the debate on the motion for second reading, to deal with Bill C-7.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to talk about any aspect of the policy of the Liberal government without referring to their general incompetence because their general incompetence underlies their whole policy, and we just had another indication of that incompetence in the parliamentary secretary's intervention. I am now telling you, Mr. Speaker, why we in this House think the government is taking an extraordinary action. It is trying to break the established rules and practices to force parliament into accepting a proposed borrowing by the federal government without giving any details as to the expenditures being contemplated. That is unacceptable to the members of the opposition.

[English]

As I was saying, not only have they been incompetent in trying to impose closure, but they are here imposing closure on a bill the debate on which they themselves have extended by the very incredible performance of last Friday when five government members got up and filibustered a bill which was not urgent on Friday but is now so urgent that they have to impose closure to get it through.

What has been suggested by various ministers and spokesmen on the government side is that all we are dealing with here is a routine financial bill. This, sir, is not at all a routine financial bill. This is a very extraordinary activity. It is an attempt by the Government of Canada to seek an unprecedented borrowing authority in an unprecedented way.

The government is seeking here the authority to borrow \$17 billion, much of that to cover spending regarding estimates which the House of Commons has never seen. To my knowl-

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edge, there is no precedent for that at all in the long history of the House of Commons of Canada. This is the first time that a government has come in here and asked for a blank cheque, a \$10 billion blank cheque, without giving parliament any indication at all of the purposes to which they intend to put this money.

What makes this even more offensive and unusual is that this is the third time this year that this government has come back to this parliament to seek an increase in borrowing authority. Already since March, 1977, they have sought and received the authority to borrow \$21 billion, and here they are back again asking for the authority to borrow \$17 billion, \$10 billion of that for expenditures that they will tell parliament and the people of Canada nothing at all about. It is unbelievable, it is unprecedented, and it is unacceptable to this House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: There is the question why this measure is so urgent that we need it now. I have been trying to get from the Minister of Finance for a long time an indication of revenue forecast for this fiscal year of the Government of Canada. We know that the revenue forecasts that the minister gave some months ago are wrong. The only question is, we do not know how wrong they are, and he will not tell us. The Minister of Finance, with his absolute faith in keeping secret from the people of Canada information which they have a right to know, even though his officials are probably telling him, refuses to tell this House of Commons what revenues the Government of Canada expects in this fiscal year and, consequently, we do not know how deep the deficit will be. We do not know how much deeper into debt this country is going to be plunged by the incompetence of this government. All we know is that today they are seeking the authority to borrow an additional \$17 billion. We do not know about the revenue projections, we do not know why it is so urgent, and we do not know why the government has rushed this bill in and interrupted the throne speech debate. Now, even though it filibustered its own debate, it is trying to force this matter through by closure. What is so urgent? Why is there such an urgent need on the part of the Government of Canada to gather unto itself an additional \$17 billion in borrowing authority? What is going on? What is being kept secret? What is the urgency that leads them to introduce this bill in this form at this time?

• (1542)

We are told there is going to be a budget. They will not give us a date—they rarely give us dates—but some time in the middle of November there is going to be a new budget. Why is the Government of Canada rushing through this demand to increase its borrowing authority before it gives us a budget? A budget should contain a projection of spending estimates, it should contain a statement of the revenues, expected by the Government of Canada, and it should contain an indication of the priorities the government is going to follow. That is coming in three weeks, so why do we have this extraordinary request for an additional \$17 billion borrowing authority right now?