

opportunity to speak in that debate, as did certain other members, and I will refer to them later. Today we have a government which is requesting \$12 billion in borrowing authority from this House. In the interests of consistency, but also in the interests of something broader, I would like simply to once again go over the arguments which were made by both opposition parties—first by the Conservatives and ourselves in 1978, and then the Liberals and ourselves in 1979, and now again the New Democratic Party joined in opposition by the Conservatives to this particular request.

The way in which the Government of Canada, whether it be a Liberal government or a Conservative government, has gone about requesting from Parliament the authority to borrow either on domestic or international markets some billions of dollars is something which we as a Parliament must consider, look at very carefully and ask ourselves, in as non-partisan a fashion as we can, whether this is really the best way to conduct our affairs.

The origin of Parliament lies in the control of the public purse. The origin of Parliament and the tremendous conflicts between monarchy and the people in the seventeenth century and afterwards took place in England because the monarchy refused to treat the people with sufficient respect. The monarchy insisted on conducting its foreign wars without going to Parliament for approval. As well as the conflict being a question of religion and of the rights of democratic principles, it was about taxation and representation. I suggest to the government that those principles are just as important now, if not more important, than they were at the time of the rise of Parliament, considering how we conduct our affairs.

We are being asked to allow the government to borrow billions of dollars anywhere in the world, at whatever rate it should or can. Such a request has not only been made by this government, and I do not think that it is a question of attacking—though I certainly will have something to say about the particular conduct of this government and its Minister of Finance—put by previous Liberal and Conservative governments. Where is the opportunity for members of Parliament to question? Some members opposite will always say, "You can always question in committee."

You, being an experienced member of this House, Mr. Speaker, know how our committee system works and how overburdened our committees are. You, sir, know how responsive ministers are to questions in committee. You know to what extent members of Parliament are really able to deal with the hard, difficult, tendentious matters and come up with conclusions.

I suggest to the government, as I suggested to the hon. member for St. John's West when he was the minister of finance, and to the hon. member for Saint-Maurice (Mr. Chrétien) when he was the minister of finance, that it is no longer good enough to simply come into this Parliament and ask for a blank cheque without presenting a budget at the same time and without giving an indication as to what the revenue picture will be—in other words, where the money is coming from, how it will be raised, how people will be taxed

### *Borrowing Authority Act*

and whether there will be indexation. Nor has the government explained how it intends to spend the money. Where is this money going?

● (2050)

It is in my view, Mr. Speaker, absurd for us to continue year after year with this cockamamy approach to the control of public expenditure and to this utterly cockamamy approach to the financial affairs of the country. As I say, it is not a partisan question. If I were a member of the government I would be equally concerned and if I were a member of cabinet I would be equally concerned. They know where these figures come from—the civil service. They give the economic policy here—the civil servants. Governments come and go—

**Mr. Corbin:** Some do.

**Mr. Rae:** Yours did and it will again. It is the entrenched force of the civil service which is there forever and it is that force we as members of Parliament have to be able to question, to grill, to find out what they intend to do, where they intend to raise the money and what they intend to do with it.

While browsing through the previous debates on this subject I came across the intervention last year by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) who is known in my part of the world as "Amazing Gray". He spoke on October 23, 1979, in his then incarnation—he once was fired but now he is hired, Amazing Gray—as the official spokesman for the opposition on financial matters.

The minister was in the House a moment ago, Mr. Speaker, and I am sorry he is not here now to listen carefully to his own words. All you have to do is change the label "Conservative" for "Liberal" and you have a very strong argument. I wonder if it is the same argument he makes in cabinet. We will never know. This is quite a long quotation but I think it is worth putting on the record. He said, as reported at page 509 of *Hansard*:

Rather than using what appears to be a device to enable it to borrow to finance the activities of government if revenues fall because of economic growth being lower than predicted for the balance of the fiscal year, the government should move more quickly than it intends to present a budget. It should be a budget that contains measures of a focused and specific nature—

I wish he would tell the minister what the word "focused" means. He went on:

—to help our economy become more productive and efficient and to deal with our deficit in current account.

While the government may argue it does not have a lot of room for manoeuvre—

How many times have we heard ministers of finance, Tory and Liberal, Liberal and Tory, tell us that they do not have any room for manoeuvre. To continue:

—it has just given us a new explanation of its stimulative deficit, just the opposite of what it said before and during the election—

How many times have we heard ministers of finance say just the opposite before and after an election. He went on:

I believe it does have some room in a budget for measures of the kind I have suggested, measures which would at least blunt and contain the adverse effects