

of every tax dollar. The government's hands are tied as a result of that so that they cannot respond to the real hardship. Now that we have real hardship in the automotive industry, now that our Saskatchewan and Manitoba farmers are hurt by the drought—

● (2130)

Mr. McDermid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you would call the government side to order and ask them to hold their committee meetings out in the lobby rather than in the House. We would like to hear the hon. member who has the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The hon. member for Lethbridge-Foothills.

Mr. Thacker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pointing out how much money we spend on simply servicing the debt without reducing the principal. What that has done is to tie the government's hands at a time when there is a legitimate need for government to be involved. There is no doubt that the auto workers are hurting badly and that we should be in there helping them. There is no doubt that the farmers in Manitoba and Saskatchewan are hurting because of a catastrophe which could well be as bad as the depression of the 1930s. They need help. Agrobusiness is something I am more familiar with, and I know they need help.

The Trudeau years, the late sixties and seventies, were good time for Canada vis-à-vis other countries in the world. It was a time when we should have been balancing our budgets so that now, as the result of the OPEC distortion and all of that work through in the world economy, when we need to borrow money to help people, we would have balanced budgets so that we could go into debt legitimately and work our way through it. That is the way the system should work, and I believe that if there were a degree of honesty on the other side, even of common sense, that would be an irrefutable truth that they would agree to. I am convinced that as citizens each and every one of us, irrespective of the party to which we belonged, that we in the upcoming constitutional negotiations ought to protect ourselves from government. We have to protect ourselves as they did in the French revolution, as they did in the American revolution or at the time of Magna Carta, and what we should be insisting in our constitution is that a federal government, or any government, cannot have a deficit except in very restricted circumstances.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thacker: One could agree in time of war. One could agree in times of real depression. And we would agree that in times of natural disaster the government should be able to go into debt, and perhaps even for capital projects which would be used by future generations. But for us to have gotten this far into debt, \$74 billion—25 per cent of our tax dollars going to service the debt without reducing the principal—an annual deficit of \$14 billion piling up—

Mr. Chénier: Repetition!

Borrowing Authority Act

An hon. Member: You have to say it many times to get it over.

Mr. Harquail: You said you wanted order. Why don't you keep quiet? Get back to your seat so that we can listen to this man.

Mr. Thacker: We are obviously getting close to adjournment. But I was going on to say that for capital projects I would have no hesitation at all in going back to my constituents and saying, "Folks, I want to borrow this money because it is going to be used for capital projects; it can be paid for by future generations." But today, we are saddling our children and our grandchildren with a debt which will give them no benefit. To that extent we should all be able to agree.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) spoke in Winnipeg of economic rights which should be enshrined in our constitution.

There is another distortion, Mr. Speaker. I believe these deficits are distorting the very fabric of our nation and the relationship between those who live in the west and those who live in the middle and those in the east. It is being distorted for no valid reason. The other cause for concern is high interest rates. People phone and write to me almost daily asking why they are so high and have to be so high. The reason is simply that Canada as a nation has a huge international debt. The debt has fallen due and we cannot pay off the note. We have to go hat in hand to the international money market and say, "Gentlemen, we cannot pay the principal; will you renegotiate it, will you relend it?" They say, "Gladly, gentlemen, because in Canada you have resources coming out of your ears; but the rate will be high." One of the members opposite was arguing that all countries have high deficits. But that does not make it right for this nation, Sir. We could have been the unprecedented leader had we stuck with balanced budgets over the last ten years. We could have been out of trouble because the hard truism is that if you do not owe the money you do not have to pay the interest. That is the lesson we know in the west.

Another distortion we continue to come back to arises because I am sure members opposite do not realize the great depth of feeling in the west over this energy situation. It goes back to our perceived feelings of ownership as set out in section 109. Ontario established that in the Supreme Court of Canada. Asbestos from Quebec, nickel from Ontario, hydro-electric from both the major provinces—all those things were sacrosanct even during the thirties when we were hurting badly. They were sacrosanct and we continued to pay world prices for those products. Now, suddenly, for the constitution to be ignored—seemingly we are to be under a different scheme—just does not sit well in the west. This is a very serious matter to which I urge members opposite to pay very close attention.

We in the west vote monolithically. We do not have that tradition of long-time Conservative, long-time Liberal adherence. It was the west that threw up the UFA in 1921, en bloc. We threw up the Progressives. We threw up the Social Credit in 1935, en bloc. We put in Peter Lougheed and his Conservatives in 1971 en masse. And, just like that, the west on this