

ment's initiatives. Some have contended that the present government has violated its own traditional principle on borrowing authority, a principle that has come to be known as the "Stevens' principle."

The "Stevens' principle" is quite simple: any borrowing authority sought by the government should be based on a forecast of financial requirements. Let me give you the historical context in which this developed.

In October, 1978, the government sought authority to borrow \$10 billion in the fiscal year 1978-79 for 1979-80, a year in which there were no published fiscal forecasts. Sinclair Stevens, then the opposition financial critic, stated in the other place in October of 1978:

Where are the facts and figures? Why does the minister need this blanket borrowing authority of \$10 billion for fiscal 1980, which is the period from April 1 of next year to March 31, 1980?

At the end of his speech, Mr. Stevens moved that:

—this House holds the opinion that the granting of an authority for massive borrowing in a future fiscal year, in advance of any budget presentation for that year, is objectionable in principle and this House therefore declines to give second reading to Bill C-7.

Note that he used the words "any budget presentation." If honourable senators will read the debate that occurred at that time, or any other debate in which our party participated, they will find that it becomes clear that the key issue was the absence of a forecast of revenues, expenditures, and financial requirements.

That was not the first time they were confronted with that situation. Less than a year later, Parliament was again asked to provide borrowing authority in the absence of fiscal projections, this time for fiscal 1983-84.

The "Stevens' principle" is quite simple: Parliament should not be asked to approve borrowing authority in the absence of published evidence that the authority is needed. The authority should be based on the financial or cash requirements of the government. The financial requirements, very simply, are the deficit less non-budgetary sources of revenue.

● (1420)

In the case in which we are now engaged, there was an economic statement delivered on November 8, 1984. On page 17 of that economic statement, this government published a projection of its expenditures, revenues, deficits, non-budgetary sources of funds and cash requirements. In short, a budgetary projection has been published. In other words, everything is available that would have been available if the government had tabled a budget.

This statement is not a party statement by me alone, because in the evidence before the committee—and I will make reference to this—the Deputy Minister of Finance said the same thing. He told the committee that they had the facts; that they were receiving all of the facts that they would have received in a budgetary presentation. I wonder—

[Senator Roblin.]

Senator Corbin: And then he disappeared.

Senator Roblin: And then he what?

Senator Corbin: And then he disappeared.

Senator Roblin: Who disappeared? The deputy minister? The deputy minister came back with the minister on Monday. He was there.

Senator Guay: No he was not.

Senator Roblin: So what?

Senator Guay: And then the minister disappeared before the end of the meeting.

Senator Haidasz: He walked off in a huff.

Senator Roblin: My honourable friends cannot get around the point that they were told by the Deputy Minister of Finance, who is not a politician, what they could find in that statement. I do not think they took the trouble to read it. I do not think they took the trouble to examine the information that was given to them. If they look at page 16 and page 17 of the Economic and Fiscal Statement, what will they find? They will find the position as set out in the Budget of February 1984 as a starting point. Not a bad place to start.

In addition to that, they will find outlined in this statement the economic changes that had taken place. So I say to my honourable friends on the other side that they had the up-to-date figures, the latest figures on November 8 of last year. Let me read them to the Senate, because the Senate is saying that it cannot approve a borrowing bill because it does not know the facts. It says that unless they get the estimates, they will not know the facts. That is a patent hypocrisy that should be blown out of the water.

Budgetary transactions:

Revenue for the period 1985-86: \$70.050 billion

Expenditures: \$104.968 billion

Deficit: \$34.918 billion

Plus all of the supporting information that is necessary to take you from the Budget of February 1984 to the position in 1986. And honourable senators say that they do not know the facts and cannot vote for this bill!

I ask honourable senators to look at the timing: This statement was delivered to the country and, surprisingly enough, to the desk of every person in this house—although one would never know it—on November 8, 1984. When did the finance bill come down in the house? It came down on November 23, 1984. When did the second reading commence? It commenced on November 28, 1984. That is not stale-dated information. That is the latest information available in this country, and the official statement of the Government of Canada.

We are told by the fiscal experts on the other side, and the constitutional authorities that are looking at me now, that that is not good enough; that that does not represent an adequate basis for judgment in this matter. Honourable senators, I leave that to the public of Canada to decide. I think if we were interested in sound business practices—and we have heard enough about that—I dare say that the senators who were