

Borrowing Authority

After we have listed our liabilities, under assets we have, as the federal Government's major asset, about \$32 billion representing its share in the assets of Crown corporations. There is also about \$7 billion in loans to the Provinces, Territories, other countries and international organizations. There is \$1 billion in things such as taxes accrued, the Veterans Loans Act, mortgages and Ottawa's 48.5 per cent interest in the Canada Development Corporation. Fixed capital assets are also included. They are buildings, Armed Forces equipment, machinery, other equipment, natural resources and so on.

It would raise the assets total considerably if we combined all these items. Indeed, if natural resources were included, we would see the federal Government in a very large surplus position. We cannot for our balance sheet count on those. There has been very clear demonstration in the past several months, particularly with what is happening in OPEC and so on, to show that we cannot rely in a traditional manner on natural resources. We are in a pinch right now because the Government counted on the revenues and taxes it hoped to achieve through the National Energy Program. Indeed, they will fall far short of the expectations of even a few short months ago.

My time is coming to a close. I have had very little time to contribute to this debate, except to read into the record what are our assets and liabilities. But in conclusion, as I call it one o'clock, let me indicate that Canadians are really looking for an indication of confidence in leadership and management of Government. This Government has not shown that. It is its responsibility to establish that vital link as soon as possible in order to achieve economic recovery.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth reminding ourselves that Bill C-143, which is now before us, is intended to empower this Government to borrow, first, \$5 billion before the end of this fiscal year, and to pass \$2 billion of that borrowing power, if that amount remains, on to the next fiscal year. In addition to the \$5 billion, the Government is seeking from Parliament the authority to borrow another \$14 billion for next year. The Government is seeking the authority to borrow that amount without telling Parliament or anyone else the purpose for which that \$14 billion is intended.

We are also dealing with an amendment put forward by the New Democratic Party which asks that the subject matter of this Bill be referred to a committee, especially the \$14 billion portion of it. The New Democratic Party is concerned about

that, as we are. Members on the other side of the House do not seem to be concerned about it at all.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Look at them, they are unconcerned.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): But \$14 billion for next year's unspecified purposes is the basis for our consideration this afternoon.

This is the first time to my knowledge, and I venture to say within the experience of anyone in this chamber, possibly the first time in the experience of anyone in any democratic parliamentary institution, that a Government has dared to put out its begging bowl to ask for authority to borrow an amount of this magnitude, \$19 billion without showing cause. This is the first time; may it be the last.

Even more reprehensible, the Government is asking this Parliament in March, 1983, to authorize this Government, which has shown its disregard for public finance, to borrow funds for the next fiscal year. I think it is worth reminding those who are listening that kings have lost their heads for less.

Parliamentary control over Government spending by long tradition—going back at least three and one-half centuries, possibly even longer—rests on the proposition that no Parliament will grant funds that are to be spent beyond the fiscal year in which they are requested. This principle after a long struggle was embedded in parliamentary practice as a result of Parliament's long struggle with Charles I; and we all know what happened to him. "Pierre the Terrible" may suffer the same fate.

We are being asked, let me repeat, to empower the Government to borrow \$19 billion—\$5 billion this year and \$14 billion next year. But for what purpose? For further interventions in the economy? For further purchases like Petrofina which cost a little bit more than \$1.5 billion? A purchase like that would use up about 10 per cent of the \$14 billion. Perhaps the Government wants to advertise more about energy self-sufficiency, which we are told is "that close" to being realized. That is not quite true either. That energy advertising cost just less than one million dollars. Those are the sorts of things the Government presumably wants the \$14 billion for—

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): They are closing bases in the riding of Northumberland-Miramichi.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):—and possibly to pay their friends, the Gillespies of this world, for their participation in projects which, if we are to believe the documentation brought forward most recently, are uneconomic.

● (1410)

Perhaps it is to find the \$11 million which the Minister offered to an enterprise in my riding last weekend, if I remember correctly, or perhaps it was the weekend before, of which \$7 million would be a straight grant and \$4 million would be an interest-free loan. This money was offered in order to create an automated chip industry, to be run by