

Borrowing Authority Act

Mr. Riis: Why do we have governments, Mr. Speaker? I suspect a lot of people in the country have been looking at individuals and reading the accounts of various Ministers as they travel across the country, and are asking themselves why we have these people and whether they are acting in our best interests. What is the point of having a government? I believe there are three reasons we have governments. They are not particularly earth-shattering, but one is to collect taxes fairly from people. That is a fundamental objective of governments throughout time.

One could argue whether taxes are being collected fairly. Over the last number of weeks we have heard many accounts which make it perfectly clear that taxes are not being collected fairly. There is ample evidence to suggest that is the case. I am certain I would not have to read long lists of names, but I could if necessary, Mr. Speaker. For the next three hours I could read lists of corporations in the country which did quite well last year, partly because of the concessions in corporate taxation. Their profits in some cases were hundreds or thousands of millions of dollars. Yet they do not pay any income tax at all. A lot of businesses today do not pay any income tax because they are not making any profits. More and more businesses are coming into that category. However, I am speaking of those corporations which make millions and millions of dollars in profit and pay no income tax at all.

It is obvious that the Government is not collecting taxes fairly in the country. We can list thousands of individual Canadians—

Mr. Blais: That is demagoguery. You know that.

Mr. Riis: The Minister of Defence shakes his head and says that is not true. He can stand in his place and explain why thousands of Canadian citizens, whose incomes—

Mr. Blenkarn: Name me a company that has taxable income and does not pay tax.

Mr. Riis: —are \$50,000, \$100,000, or \$1 million a year, pay absolutely no income tax.

Mr. Blenkarn: Because they do not make any income.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. May we have one debate at a time please? The Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) has the floor.

Mr. Riis: Why is it whenever I raise the matter of individuals not paying income tax, or corporations making profits and not paying income tax, that people try to interrupt this portion of my speech? It is because I touch a nerve in people over there? Is it because I suggest to people, wherever they sit, that this is an uncomfortable topic to a lot of people?

Mr. Blenkarn: We thought you were brighter than that.

Mr. Riis: Another reason we have governments, Mr. Speaker, is to spend wisely, in the best interests of the people of the country, the money that has been collected. When we see how

these moneys are being spent it is perfectly clear they are not being spent in the best interests of Canadian citizens.

I will use one simple example to illustrate this. We have oil companies which call themselves Canadian oil companies but which are really Canadian subsidiaries of the transnational oil companies. They say they are hesitant to explore for oil in the frontier areas unless we bribe them into doing that. I do not believe they would use the term "bribe", but I use it consciously. Therefore, the Government bribes the transnational oil companies, through their Canadian subsidiaries, to explore in the Beaufort Sea, the Hibernia fields and so on.

How much do we bribe these people, Mr. Speaker? When one considers the great expense of drilling some of those oil wells, perhaps \$200 million, the taxpayers of Canada pay about \$180 million out of that \$200 million through PIP grants. There is not one oil producing country in the world that would even think of doing that. There is not one oil producing country that welcomes transnational oil companies to come in and explore their frontier areas on that basis. Those countries give absolutely no grants or bribes to the oil companies yet they are still exploring there.

● (1250)

Mr. Blais: You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr. Riis: The Minister of National Defence says that I do not know what I am talking about. Let us talk about Norway which is also conducting offshore oil exploration. Does the country of Norway bribe those companies with taxpayers' money? No, it does not. It does not use the taxpayers' money to pay for 80 per cent or 90 per cent of those exploration costs. I am just suggesting that if there is a fundamental purpose of government, it is to spend taxpayers' money wisely. The Government is not doing that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is attempting to follow the Hon. Member's speech but the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Blais) continues to shell the Hon. Member. He uses crossfire. That is not permissible according to Standing Order 15, I remind the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Riis: Thank you for your intervention, Mr. Speaker. I would not call the Minister rude at all because I think that what I am saying is embarrassing to the Minister. The Minister knows that what I am saying is perfectly accurate but he finds it embarrassing since some of his constituents may be watching television and thinking that perhaps they should pay the Hon. Member a visit to his office to have him explain why so many people with sizeable incomes do not pay income tax and how the Government justifies that. However, I will leave that aside since I do not want to stray from my remarks.

The Government has another role besides that of collecting taxes fairly and spending taxpayers' money wisely. One of its very important roles is to provide leadership and the opportunity for Canadians to expand and take advantage of the natural and capital resources of our country.