

Borrowing Authority

● (1250)

The Government seems to think this will somehow be a job-creating kind of scheme. I suppose it would be if it did not upgrade the line which of itself would be a job-creating scheme. Some Conservatives seem to think if they do not upgrade these lines what we will have instead is a lot of local employment with truckers moving grain 30 and 40 miles to the new railway points. This will employ more people driving trucks and maintaining and building roads. Unfortunately, it will also create a much higher cost system for local farmers and local communities. They will have to pay higher local taxes to maintain the road system. Local farmers will have to pay more for getting the grain trucked to the railway. It is a very shoddy type of economics and the worst kind of attempted political patronage I think I have witnessed in my eight years in politics. Yet this seems to be the direction the Conservatives wish to take this country.

Perhaps it also explains the manipulation of expenditures, with an attempt to create jobs, and may also explain why we have forecasted increases in expenditures in the last two years of the mandate of some 7.7 per cent and 5.5 per cent, while at the beginning of the mandate the actual increase in expenditures was 1.9 per cent. The Minister attempted to establish his credibility as a cost cutter in the first years. While he still believes in laying off the Public Service he continues to spend more money. I think that is in part caused by replacing civil servants with contracts to private corporations or individuals who in fact provide the same service at higher cost.

That seems to be the case with respect to public research, particularly in the Department of Agriculture. Since the Government took over there has been a cut-back of some 500 person-years in the research capacity of that department. Many of those positions are for professionals, some are technicians and other back-up services.

This I suppose represents the philosophical approach the current Government seems to have that research should be conducted by private rather than public entities. I think that is a grave mistake. I know of a number of instances where public research has resulted in great savings for individual farmers and consumers. This kind of research would never be conducted by private firms because there would be no reason to engage in research that would find ways of avoiding buying their products, for example. I think public research has to continue. It has a very good role to play and I hope the expenditures in future Budgets take that into account.

I see you are signalling that my time is up. I will close by remarking that I find it very difficult to understand how we can continue to have these very high debt loads going into our fiscal year, \$25.3 billion being borrowed up front, knowing we will have to come back to the House for more, at a time when the Minister says he is reducing the deficit. Yet, as I pointed

out, it has gone up phenomenally during the course of this Minister's tenure in office.

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the Hon. Member opposite. I have two very critical questions to ask him.

He was not in the House, nor was I, during the last minority Government of 1972, 1973, and 1974. However, we know that the current Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) was then the Minister of Finance. As such he raised expenditures in two successive budget years by 30 per cent and more. His Government put in place policies that reduced the growth of income. The debt problems we are talking about today are a direct consequence of the NDP support for that minority Liberal Government which tried to bribe the voters through increased expenditures without any sense of fiscal responsibility concerning raising offsetting revenue.

My first question is this. If faced with a similar situation in the future, will he and his Party behave in the same way? His Party argued consistently for spending and we hear very little about revenue raising. He did not mention in his speech that the recent Budget would require no borrowing, we would not be standing in this House today asking to borrow \$25.3 billion if we did not have to pay interest on money borrowed because of policies supported by the NDP in partnership, as usual, with the Liberal Party. We would have a surplus of well over \$3 billion this year which we could use to reduce the debt Canadian taxpayers owe. We are just borrowing money to pay interest on the debt that was created, starting back in 1972, 1973, and 1974. That is my first question. Will they in future act in the same fiscally irresponsible fashion?

My second question is this. In 1979 the NDP moved a motion of non-confidence in the Conservative Government. The Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) was the Minister of Finance. Every reputable economic group in the country said that his 1979 Budget was the fairest Budget to the poor people of Canada in the entire decade. When the NDP had clout in a minority Government they did not produce Budgets that were fair to poor people. This Party produced one in 1979 and they threw us out of office. We have a right to know, as do Canadian taxpayers, whether they will act in that fashion in the future to punish the poor of the country? Will they act in a fashion designed to increase the debt load for future generations instead of being fiscally responsible?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Chair realizes that the Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) would very much like to reply to the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary. To make sure that he does get equal time, I think the best way to do it would be after Question Period.