

realize eventually that what he has begun here at this time can become an extremely dangerous precedent.

Finally, you will have won because you will have delayed us the passing of the bill. What will be the cost to the Canadian taxpayer? The Minister of Finance says yes. He adds that at least the risk is there and everyone agrees. One cannot make the required calculations in that area. But sure enough this is a kind of filibuster that is carried out under a false, childish pretence and it does not hold water. Such a delay could be costly to Canadians and may jeopardize the Senate's normal operation. This is a dangerous precedent that is undermining the Senate's credibility. On some occasions, your duty is to fight the government, but you made a very wrong choice for that first battle. It is not justified, neither by the subject of the bill nor by your own argument. You have obtained all the useful information, and you will not have any more the day the bill receives Royal Assent. However you will have jeopardized this institution's credibility.

Under the circumstances, if we are to close this debate, one of you who supports that resolution will need to have the courage to tell us exactly at what specific moment the Opposition will agree to support third reading of the bill in order that the issue be placed before all the members of the Senate. I seriously suspect that the opinion held by the Leader of the Opposition is not shared seriously by all the Liberal senators. You should tell us at what time you will be ready to accept the bill and introduce an amendment to the resolution of the Leader of the Government asking the committee to report the bill back next week, but please have the heart to say so.

It is in that sense that I maintain that your strategy was cowardly, because from the outset you never had the heart to say you were only groping in the dark. You are caught in your own snare, with your own problem. You have the baby on your knees, try to get rid of it now. At least do tell us at what time you are ready to let go. Have the heart to suggest a clear solution to the debate.

At that point, we will know where you, as the Leader of the Opposition and the other senators will be sitting. Apparently some of them support the Leader of the Opposition, but I am sure a good number will not be here. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to prove that the vast majority of the Liberals here endorsed that scheme which is in my view, unworthy of the Senate. It is unworthy of a group of people who oppose a new government with a strong mandate, and which picks on a matter that is so far remote from the Senate's responsibilities as a borrowing bill to say: "No, we are not passing that bill because we do not have adequate information". And you know full well beforehand what you will be getting as far as information is concerned, since you already have to the extent needed for making a decision.

Therefore, I urge the Leader of the Opposition to appoint someone who will tell us at what time you are ready to pass the bill and who will introduce an amendment, so that we know

[Senator Flynn.]

where we stand and stop wasting our time nit-picking as we have now been doing for too long here.

• (2100)

[English]

Hon. Henry D. Hicks: Honourable senators, I would like to begin my remarks by complimenting Senator Roblin on making such a good plea for such a bad case. He really did a very good job, and I was glad that Senator MacEachen followed him and demolished his case so expertly. I am quite aware of the fact that this is a motion to direct the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance to report Bill C-11 forthwith today. I am also aware that most of the debate has taken into account the merits of Bill C-11, which is not surprising, and I shall continue my remarks along the same lines.

I am opposed to the passage of this bill in its present form at this time. I am opposed to it because it is bad parliamentary practice, and we have heard many well documented arguments to verify that in this chamber this afternoon and this evening.

Senator Flynn: You don't believe them.

Senator Hicks: Furthermore, the action would be unprecedented, so far as I can discover, but I do not need to elaborate on that in view of the very elaborate presentation given by Senator Stewart this afternoon, who certainly did his homework. In any event, I agree with the argument that to give a blank cheque to a government to borrow for a future fiscal year without any spending program being outlined, either by way of a budget or even by tabling the main estimates, ought not to be done. We had some indications from Senator Stewart this afternoon that the same Conservatives who now form the government had expressed even stronger views about this when they were in opposition and had insisted, not only that they should see the main estimates before passing the borrowing resolution, but that the legislation should wait until the budget resolution had passed. Frankly, that was the view that I took when I originally addressed myself to Bill C-11. My colleagues persuaded me that we could compromise to the extent of saying that we would allow the bill to be reported after we had a chance to examine the main estimates. That is the situation in which we find ourselves now.

I do not want to be repetitive and I need merely recite that we have no objection to Part I of the bill. We were willing to grant the \$7.3 billion borrowing authority for the current fiscal year fully a month ago. However, I am totally opposed to Part II of the bill as, indeed, are all my colleagues on this side of the house.

Senator Murray: But they are going to pass it.

Senator Hicks: In due course, after they have examined the evidence which the honourable senator's colleagues in the other place consistently insisted upon while they were in opposition and to which Liberal governments in those times, even though they had a majority and might have forced such legislation through, gave way. That would have been the gracious thing for the present Minister of Finance to have done.