

Borrowing Authority Act

the last two decades has not, on balance, proven its worth to our society. Quite the opposite. It has retarded growth, encouraged inflation, and undermined our competitiveness.

No, the long-term path to progress—to recovery, if you will—lies in Government restraint not just in spending but in overall terms. In its size. In its activities. In its will to guide us from cradle to grave. No thinking person would deny Government's role in formulating economic and social goals for Canada, but I'm suggesting it need not and should not be concerned with specifying the means to achieve those goals. That is better left to the marketplace.

That is sound advice, Mr. Speaker. I do not know where you would get any better. In place of that we have the Minister of Finance saying he is not worrying because the value of the Canadian dollar is depreciating. He is not lying awake at night thinking about that. When the value of the Canadian dollar depreciates the first effect is that we run into inflation. This is devastating. We must be able to control inflation. The only way we will do that is to have more responsibility put into the marketplace in the hands of the Canadian people. The Government must create that climate in order for that to take place. That is the best advice I can give the people opposite. I hope they pay attention.

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, the Bill we have before us is very light and short. The body of the Bill is contained on one page about eight inches by eleven inches. Even though it is light and very short, that is not the effect it is going to have upon the Canadian people. Its weight will substantially add to the burden of debt which rests upon the shoulders of Canadians today. The effects will span the years and enchain our children and our children's children for generations to come.

I have lost count of the times I have heard Liberal spokesmen declare that their intention was and is to exercise restraint and reduce the deficit. However, like most of the predictions made in so many areas, the announced goals were seldom, if ever, realized. In seeking borrowing authority for the unprecedented amount of \$29.55 billion in this Bill before us, the Government has reduced its diminishing credibility to minus zero.

I listened with interest this morning to the speech of the Hon. Member for Willowdale (Mr. Peterson). He stated that we in the Progressive Conservative Party have been asking for the impossible in requesting reduced deficits. Why, then, has that been promised so often by the Liberals? Apparently they had no more intention of reducing the deficit and exercising restraint than they had when they promised to keep the price of gasoline lower than that which was predicted by the Conservative Government several years ago.

The Government is asking for authority to borrow \$29.55 billion. This is the eighth time the Government has come before this Parliament to request such authority. Bill C-30 was for \$12 billion. Bill C-59 was for \$14 billion. Bill C-111 was for \$6.6 billion. Bill C-125 was for \$7 billion. Bill C-128 was for \$4 billion. Bill C-143 was for \$19 billion. Bill C-151 was for \$10.71 billion. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have the unconscionable Bill C-21 requesting \$29.55 billion. This is a total of \$102 billion requested in this Parliament.

As has been underlined by several of my colleagues in the course of debate, the amount requested in this Bill is far in excess of the amount required to meet the Government's commitments. There has been no clear reason given why the request has been made or for what purposes the money will be used. The Government's spokespersons, including the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde), have loudly declared that economic recovery is the prevailing trend today. I suggest that the evidence points to the contrary. I think it is safe to say that any seeming degree of recovery is, at the very best, exceedingly fragile. Furthermore, unemployment as of January this year stands at 11.2 per cent. Manufacturing is at 70.5 per cent of capacity and business and farming bankruptcies continue at an alarming rate. Farm income is declining. These facts do not indicate or support in any way the claim that recovery is a continuing reality.

● (1200)

I would like to call attention to the report of the Conference Board of January, 1984. It points out that the Canadian economy will experience four quarters of negative growth in 1985. The rate of job creation will slow over the course of 1984 and 1985, and will be negative in the last half of 1984. As a consequence, unemployment will fall to 10.8 per cent this summer and then rise to 11.3 per cent by the end of next year. It points out that the federal deficit is seen as remaining in the \$27 billion range on a national accounts basis. Short-term interest rates will rise by two percentage points between now and the end of 1985. Capital investment will continue to be weak or negative. I do not believe there is anything in those figures that would indicate that the recovery is even holding, let alone improving across the country.

I suggest that the Bill in its current form is completely unacceptable. While we can acknowledge the necessity to meet the legitimate costs of a responsible government, we cannot meekly permit the Government to build up a surplus to finance unknown activities at taxpayers' expense.

When we look at the entire picture, I cannot understand how the Government has the colossal nerve to come before this Parliament and ask us to support a measure that will impose such a further horrendous deficit upon the Canadian people and demand that they contribute another \$29.5 billion without indicating what it will be used for or how it will affect our country.

If we could see that these vast expenditures were improving the lot of the Canadian people, perhaps it would be entirely different. However, the figures that I and many of my colleagues have presented to the House would indicate that, to the contrary, it is simply a matter of pouring money into a hole in the ground. Rather than seeing an improvement so that our people are happy, contented, prosperous and confident, I believe when people see the activities of the Government and the demands it is making on the taxpayers of this country, they become increasingly depressed, to the point where we find that the social effects upon Canadian society because of the eco-