

Borrowing Authority

regards the House of Commons as a nuisance and a bother. He never, never participates in the debates about our country.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: He thinks so little of the House of Commons that he is well known for this reference to members of Parliament as being nobodies. Now, at his direction, the House leader has imposed—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but I have to make a reference to a member in the House across the way, because the only time he speaks is when he is seated. He never speaks when he is standing up. I am, of course, referring to the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau).

If the Prime Minister participated in these debates and if he understood that the people of Canada are concerned in the context of today's conditions, he would know that the people want to have a debate on the economic circumstances of Canada. This is a very important and worth-while debate in terms of what is happening in our country.

Many constituents speak to me and ask why we have not addressed ourselves to some of the serious problems in our country at the present time. They ask why we have a preoccupation about matters such as the constitution. They ask why we do not get on to the realities of the economic circumstances in Canada today. I can only reply that this debate offers members of the House of Commons the opportunity to make suggestions to the government and to discuss the economic circumstances of our country.

An hon. Member: You are driving him out of the House.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The Prime Minister has moved to a place where he should be in this House, and that is to the backbenches.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The people of Canada do want to hear about the economic circumstances of our country. They want to hear why it is that our government is coming to Parliament to ask for authority to borrow \$14 billion. After 12 years, the legacy of this Prime Minister is that the government goes to the foreign markets and to the banks in this country—

Mr. Trudeau: He is reading the newspaper.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I do not mind the Prime Minister not speaking in this House but this is the first time he has ever sat in the House during the course of a debate.

Mr. Trudeau: At least I am listening, but your hon. members are not.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: My hon. members are listening with rapt attention.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I speak not only to the Prime Minister but to the people of Canada. I can tell them that this is an important bill. Many people do not understand the enormity of this particular legislation.

Mr. Trudeau: I don't have to. Look at Crosbie.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The Prime Minister says, "lend me \$14 billion".

An hon. Member: Why?

Mr. Trudeau: He is reading the funny papers.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: People do not understand what a billion is.

Mr. Regan: Try \$140 a second.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Do people really understand? One billion seconds ago the first atomic bomb had not yet been exploded. One billion hours ago Christ was still on this earth.

An hon. Member: Where did you get that from?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: One billion years ago man was still living in caves. One billion dollars ago, in terms of federal government spending, was yesterday.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: That is the reality of our circumstances in Canada today.

I would ask members on the other side to restrain themselves, Mr. Speaker. I know they will want to listen with enthusiasm to what I have to say.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Today we have been faced with closure once again as part of the arsenal of tactics of this government. Because of its majority, closure has been imposed on a most important bill which we must consider in this Parliament. The argument has been made that this bill has received some 12 hours of attention and therefore we must move it from the House of Commons and into committee where it will not embarrass the government. The government's main preoccupation is to move the bill off the floor of the House of Commons into the obscurity of a committee where it will not have the full attention of the public and the mismanagement which has taken place under this government, will pass unmarked.