

The Constitution

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Unlike the Hon. Minister, I haven't got a thing to hide.

Mr. Crosbie: That is what they have all told me about you.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Let us look at what the Bill in question did, the Bill which prompted this whole phony resolution. It contained two parts. I am taking my time here, Mr. Speaker, because there has been a lot of hullabaloo about nothing. The media were seduced and inveigled into immediate reporting of what they thought the facts were, but let's go through the facts.

The Bill contained two parts. One part provided a borrowing authority for \$7.3 billion for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1985. Part II was to provide authority to borrow \$12 billion to be used in the fiscal year ending March 31, 1986, for which we had not been provided spending plans; the Estimates had not been produced. The Leader of the Government in the Senate, the former Premier of Manitoba, Duff Roblin, admitted as much when he said on February 21 in the other place, and I am reading from the Senate *Hansard*, that:

Parliament should not be asked to approve borrowing authority in the absence of published evidence that the authority is needed.

That is Senator Roblin, Government Leader in the Senate, speaking in the Senate on this particular Bill. He was not alone in that belief. On a similar piece of legislation, the former Prime Minister, now the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), when in opposition said, and I am reading from *Hansard* of July 19, 1982:

—this House holds the opinion that the granting of an authority for the borrowing of a sum greater than that amount which is required to meet the government's needs to the end of the current fiscal year is objectionable in principle—

The next day the current Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) added his agreement, and I cite the debates of this House of July 20, 1982:

There is a well established principle that Parliament only provides sufficient borrowing authority to a government to allow it to finance its operations within the current fiscal year.

That is the same principle that the Senate upheld in this Bill. Not to be outdone, the current Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), when he was in this seat as Leader of the Opposition during the Progressive Conservative leadership race, had the following to say about a request very similar to Bill C-11 from the then Minister of Finance, Marc Lalonde. On February 22, 1983 he said this:

It is a parliamentary first, sir, when you have a Minister who comes before Parliament and asks for authority to go to the public for \$14 billion without the supporting and buttressing evidence of a budget.

The principle is clear: without a Budget or the Estimates, you do not get the money. That has been fundamental to Parliament ever since the early days of Westminster.

Mr. Crosbie: How come you didn't observe it when you were in power?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Oh, I am going to get to it right here. The Conservative Party always took that position.

When the Government was in opposition, when these ladies and gentlemen were on the opposition side of the House, they took the position that authority should not be granted until Parliament has received not only the Main Estimates, but a Budget as well. The current Minister of Finance, when in opposition, said about not doing this, and I use his words of February 22, 1983, as recorded in *Hansard*:

The utter contempt that this Government is showing Parliament and Canadians is unprecedented.

What happened to this principle for which the Government when in opposition spoke so eloquently and forcefully in support of? Power corrupts, and I have never seen power corrupt so absolutely or so quickly as when it affects this particular Government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): That principle, for which the Minister of Finance and the Deputy Prime Minister fought in opposition—

Mr. Crosbie: The new Lord Acton! No wonder you want to retain the House of Lords.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I do not blame the Minister for not being attentive; he is having trouble following this argument. In any event, what happened? At the first opportunity they rejected that principle. They presented Bill C-11, the borrowing Bill, and this whole tempest in a teapot arose out of that Bill. Some \$12 billion in additional spending for the next year—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: And \$15 million is a tempest in a teapot to you.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): —with no estimates. That is why on November 28 in this House my friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri-Westmount (Mr. Johnston)—

Mr. Rossi: Where are you going, John?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): —moved the following—I seem to have—

Mr. Rossi: This is too much for you. Listen and learn, stick around.

Mr. Crosbie: Can I be excused?

Mr. Rossi: Stick around.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I am not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. We do have to leave the room once in a while. Order, please. The right hon. gentleman has the floor.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): That might be the only place where the Hon. Minister really knows what he is doing, Mr. Speaker, so I will not object.