

Borrowing Authority

business incentives to large business groups and oil companies. If you want to review the system, review the tax system which has created some degree of regressivity with respect to social programs. Do not do it on the backs of the middle-income people in the country, as has been proposed by the Conservative Party.

Finally, there are other important issues to be debated in the House of Commons over the next four years. I have some concern about the direction the Government is taking on social programs, defence policy, foreign affairs and free trade with the U.S. If the Government uses the same process to have a legitimate debate on other issues besides the social programs, it will be difficult to function with some civility in the House. We cannot afford to have a Government front bench with four different positions on an issue. I invite the Government to have legitimate debate, but prior to doing so it must set out the parameters for debate so that the Government is united. What it has done here has been a disservice to Parliament.

● (1430)

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think there would be agreement by all Members to give unanimous consent to the Hon. Member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith) to continue and explain his definition of universality and which programs today are universal in nature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that is a point of order. Unless there is unanimous consent, there is no provision for a question in the draft Order.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a great sense of pride and commitment. I am very proud to be the government Member who follows the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) in this debate. He has given this House an argument that is eloquent, that is committed and that gives integrity to the social programs that this Government stands for.

I am also proud to be here because our Party follows in the tradition of former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. He and his Party were one of the first in this country to be committed to a system of national health care.

I am also proud to be speaking today because I represent a riding that looks to the Government for leadership. I have a sense of commitment to the people of my riding. When I talk to an Italian Canadian who lives on Bond Road in my riding, who is a proud Canadian and has worked in this country for 20 years only to lose his job because of the policies of the former Government, I know that I have a responsibility in the House. In my constituency there is a recent Caribbean immigrant who owns a shop on Eglinton Avenue which is on the verge of bankruptcy because of the policies of the former Government. I am here on behalf of all those people who are looking to the Government and our Party for leadership and a sense of fiscal responsibility. They want a government that will look after the interests of those proud people who are prepared to work and have started a business for which they worked hard. That is why I ran to be a Member of the House of Commons. That is

why I am honoured to be a Member of the House. I can serve the people of the riding of St. Paul's.

Today I want to talk about the fiscal responsibility of our Government and the changes we want to make so that the Government and the country can plan for the future. I am here to talk about Bill C-11, an Act to provide borrowing authority. No one knows better than I that borrowing is not a pleasant task for any Government. We are seeking to borrow \$12 billion for the first few months of the fiscal year 1985-86. The Government originally intended to borrow \$16 billion but we have agreed to reduce that amount by \$4 billion as a result of the concerns raised by some Hon. Members of the House.

Many Members have reservations about borrowing requests for the next fiscal year. Let me take a few moments to explain the situation in which the Government finds it necessary to request this authority.

This amount should be sufficient to cover the financial requirements to the end of June, 1985. It is directly linked to the Government's expected financial requirement in the first quarter of 1985-86. As many Hon. Members know, the financial requirements of the Government are not distributed equally throughout the fiscal year. They are usually very heavy in the first part of the year and this seasonal pressure is due largely to the requirements among Canadian citizens for income tax refunds.

Over the past five fiscal years the proportion of the total years' financial requirement for the first quarter has ranged from 21 per cent to 49 per cent of the year's total. For fiscal year 1985-86 the Government expects that \$11 billion to \$12 billion, or 38 per cent of the financial requirement for the year, will be required during that three-month period.

Members opposite have made a great deal of the Government's request for 1985-86 and have raised the fear in the minds of Canadians that the Government is somehow attempting to ignore Parliament. Let me assure all Members that the traditions, rights and privileges of Parliament are foremost in the minds and actions of this Government and of this Minister.

I can assure the House that in our economic statement, the paper that we discussed, in the amendment to the Bill and what we are telling the House today, we have laid on the Table an agenda which gives Hon. Members a very clear picture of where the Government stands, where it intends to go and what its financial requirements will be over the next year. It is a far clearer picture than the House has ever had before.

I would be remiss if I did not mention my own discomfort in coming before the House to request such tremendous sums of money to be borrowed. The Government is not the author of this unfortunate situation. The former administration placed this burden on the people of Canada and passed it along to us. This Government with its sense of financial responsibility is committed to implement the changes which our Party outlined during the summer campaign in order to rejuvenate this country's economy so that those who come to this House in the future will never be forced into a situation where they must seek such authority or be required to approve such measures.