

his effort, notwithstanding that he is not convincing us as the jury.

Senator Sinclair has demonstrated that it is quite inaccurate to assert that the country's finances have been devastated because Royal Assent has not been given to Part I. If it were accurate that serious consequences for our dollar, our finances, and our economy flow from the fact that Part I of this bill has not become law, I think it could be argued, as it has been argued here this afternoon, that Mr. Wilson has to assume some of that responsibility. He is the one who rejected the enactment of Part I.

I think we have to be sympathetic. The Minister of Finance is a very busy man, and I rather suspect that this bill was fairly well along before he detected that there were serious objections on grounds of principle, principle which he well understands. I think this bill was fairly well along before he became seized of the matter. I would hope that, even at this late date, he will take advantage of the proposal which is before him.

May I say to my Progressive Conservative friends that I think that if the Minister of Finance had said "yes" a month ago, if he had said, "I do not care about losing face; I can explain this to my colleagues, but I am going to do the right thing consistent with what I have always advocated"—if the minister had said that, it would have redounded to the political advantage of his government and his party.

I suggest to honourable senators that, if the government would demonstrate that kind of flexibility and consistency today to the principles that they formerly advocated, the same will still happen. If I were an ardent, rank, rabid Liberal, I might be uneasy that they may come to see and grasp the opportunity. I think it would be good for the country and for Parliament to have the Progressive Conservative Party in power, as in opposition, recognize the great principle that Parliament ought not to vote borrowing authority without adequate documentation of the need to spend that money having been placed before Parliament.

Thank you, honourable senators, for your attention.

Senator Sinclair: Would the honourable senator permit a question?

Senator Flynn: Not another speech!

Senator Stewart: I am hesitant to permit a question because someone might suspect that I have prompted my seatmate, but I will try to answer the question.

Senator Sinclair: On Monday, when the Minister of Finance gave evidence before the Senate committee, he put a great deal of emphasis and reliance on the precedent that he said permitted him to do what he wanted the committee to do and what he wanted the Senate to do.

My question is this: Is the precedent on which he was relying the one that the Honourable Mr. Lambert referred to as "bootleg" and the Honourable Erik Nielsen referred to as being "flawed," and one that had not been accepted? Is that the precedent the minister was relying on?

Senator Stewart: Honourable senators, the short answer is, yes. I thought I had made that abundantly clear. That precedent of 1977 occurred during transition from the old procedure, when borrowing authority was contained in appropriation bills, to the new procedure, which came into use in 1978, the new procedure under which borrowing authority is sought in separate and distinct bills.

So, the 1977 instance occurred during a time of transition, and I think it ought not to be relied upon at all. It is not a relevant precedent. That is my answer, Senator Sinclair.

Senator Phillips: I wonder if I could direct a question to the Honourable Senator Stewart. In my brief and concise remarks, I asked him to explain his attitude concerning passing the bill after receiving the estimates. I noticed that he carefully avoided that in his remarks. Would he now tell us what his intentions will be after receiving the estimates?

Senator Stewart: Yes, I have no problem with that. What I am arguing is that the government's application for authority to borrow ought to be in good order, as any application ought to be in good order.

What my reaction will be to that application, supported by the main estimates, I can tell you in candor. If the main estimates do not contain provision for money to support the Parliament of Canada, I will have great difficulty in reacting favourably. Frankly, I do not expect the absence of that kind of provision. If, for example, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is abolished, if there is no provision for that department, I will have great difficulties. But I do not expect that; consequently, I can give Senator Phillips an assurance on which he can rely. I can assure him that, if the main estimates are tabled on Monday next, I will be prepared to vote on Wednesday next for the acceptance of this bill. If they are tabled on Tuesday next, I will do so on Thursday next. I have no problem there at all.

However, if Parliament were going to be deprived of its necessary funds, I would have difficulties, but I have no notion that the present government would ever think of doing that. That is why I can give the honourable senator that kind of assurance. I think that is a fairly reasonable position, and Senator Phillips seems to agree with me.

● (1740)

Hon. Finlay MacDonald: Honourable senators—

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Macdonald: I think what I have to say I can say before 6 p.m. I can assure you that, had I had my druthers, I would have chosen another occasion to rise in this chamber for the first time, and it would have been to speak on just about anything other than Bill C-11.

It is almost a month since I was sworn into this august chamber—almost the same length of time since Bill C-11 had second reading. I rather feel that Bill C-11 and I have started to grow old together.

Senator Gigantès: You age better.