

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that Members on the government side must be very happy that the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn) was not able to answer that question. It just points out another embarrassing situation in which they find themselves. I am not surprised that the Hon. Member was muzzled by members of his own Party. The comments he has made about the workers of Canada are unbelievable and in fact express to the Canadian people the kind of hidden hypocrisy of his Party and the disdain in which his Party holds the Canadian workers.

For the Hon. Member to suggest that Canadians are taking advantage of the unemployment insurance system, that they are scheming and plotting to rip off the system, that they are not prepared to work and that they are prepared in fact to rip off the system, is an absolute travesty and distortion of the facts as they exist, not only in the community of Hamilton which has very severe unemployment problems, but in other communities across Canada as well. Perhaps the economy of the community of the Hon. Member for Mississauga South is robust enough to withstand the kind of onslaught of fiscal slashing that we have seen in the Finance Minister's economic statement.

When the Hon. Member says to the House that a 15 per cent increase in ferry rates is no problem I know the Hon. Member is not reflecting the view of Hon. Members on this side of the House. I am not sure that he is reflecting the views of other Conservative members from the Maritimes who have been elected on a platform of creating jobs and stimulating the economy.

With this borrowing Bill, we have another indication of the unbridled arrogance of the Tory majority. In an almost unprecedented move, a decision was made by the Government to move ahead with a borrowing authority Bill, which in fact goes into a new fiscal year and which occurs at a time prior to the tabling of the Supplementary Estimates.

This Government preaches co-operation. However, if we look at the record of the Government over the last few weeks, it is clear that it has no intention of co-operating and has no intention of trying to work out an opportunity for all Members to participate. I would like specifically to draw to the attention of the House the kind of abrogation of democracy that we have seen with the introduction of this particular borrowing Bill. This Bill is in the same spirit as the Government's tactics over the last few days of trying to deny Members an opportunity to speak in their respective committees and in the House of Commons.

For those in the House who did not have an opportunity to witness this let me say that there was a ridiculous situation in the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration studying the Estimates last night in which government members convened a meeting with less than 24 hours' notice. The opposition critics could not be properly substituted. The Minister of Labour (Mr. McKnight) was present discussing housing Estimates and I was present in my role as Official Opposition critic but did not have the right to vote on those Estimates. To me, Mr. Speaker, and to Members on this side

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of the House, that is a clear indication of the Government's secretive and closed approach to parliamentary democracy.

We have heard the motion moved some time ago by the former Leader of the Official Opposition. At that time he said that borrowing provisions should not extend into a new fiscal year. It again seems to me that when Conservative members were in Opposition, they sang one tune, but now that they are in Government, they are singing a totally different song.

I think Members on all sides of the House must hold dear to their hearts our required parliamentary tools. In particular, all Members are aware of the massive mandate given by the Canadian people to the Conservative Government on September 4. That massive mandate carries with it a very unique responsibility, and that responsibility is to ensure that constructive criticism can be carried out in the House of Commons and in parliamentary committees, and this is particularly true, Mr. Speaker, when this Government preaches co-operation. This Government is saying to the Opposition, "We need \$16 billion to carry on government business".

● (1730)

Unlike the former opposition Party which now sits on the government side of the House, we in the Liberal Party do not want to be obstructionist. We want to assist the Government in carrying out its responsibility in discharging the mandate it received from the Canadian people. However, incumbent upon the government members is the recognition that in order to be able to carry out that responsibility, they must have all of the facts at hand. It is irresponsible to suggest that on the basis of a less than one page document, in both official languages, we should give to the Government of Canada the authority to borrow \$16 billion. This should not be done without discussion and Supplementary Estimates, without the kind of voting authority which should be accorded to every Hon. Member of this House, and without the tabling of documents, which have been clearly denied us by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson). Therefore, it would be irresponsible for us, as Hon. Members of the Official Opposition, to support this legislation.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this move by the Government, not only to muzzle the Hon. Member for Mississauga South, but to muzzle the kind of constructive opposition we are attempting to provide, is just another indication of a Government which is afraid to go to the Canadian people. It is afraid to put the facts on the table and it is afraid to let the Canadian people know about the measures it is considering when it moves on budgetary items.

I asked, Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions in this House for the Finance Minister to table the forecasted job losses which would happen as a direct result of his economic statement. Yet the Minister of Finance has refused to do so. He knows, as his colleagues know, that his Conservative Government was given a massive mandate on a promise of jobs, jobs, jobs, but since this Government has been in power, all we have seen from coast to coast is cuts, cuts, cuts. And the Hon. Member for Mississauga South has the gall to stand in his place and suggest that the ferry cuts are just one small cut in a