

Borrowing Authority Act

ments toward the new direction of which I speak. We should not be giving the government a blank cheque. I am not prepared today to move an amendment, but I say on behalf of our side that we are prepared to consider such an amendment.

Let me return to the purpose of this measure. We do not know the purpose for which these funds will be used. We do not know the direction the government is proposing to take. There has been no accountability to Parliament. This is a fundamental problem in respect of what the government is asking us today. We do not know the broad direction of fiscal policy, nor do we know what combination of fiscal and monetary policy we will be having or whether it will be consistent. We do not know whether the Bank of Canada will be able to live with what the government is going to be doing after the budget comes down. Until we know that, this House in good conscience cannot provide the government with the borrowing authority for a full year. To do so would be irresponsible, and it would not be fulfilling our obligation to the Canadian electorate.

Let me close by referring to one of the long-term problems of inflation. It is a problem that I believe we in this House should be very concerned about. We have a free country. We cherish this free country. What inflation does to that freedom is erode it on an ongoing basis. We are living here in an unreal world with low income taxes in Canada. They are much lower than they should be for the size of our government spending. We have to close that gap. We are living here with unrealistically low energy prices. That is very comfortable at this point in time, and we can sit here with a big smile on our faces and feel comfortable, but consider what it does to the freedoms of our children and our children's children. When the time comes they will have to support the higher tax load that will be required in Canada. This is a tax load that will go on and on and get higher as we continue to endure these very high rates of interest. That is why we have to take action, Mr. Speaker. That is why it is very important that we try to project ourselves a little bit further beyond the easier times we have today with lower energy prices and lower taxes. If we do not do, the legacy we are leaving our children will be something I personally will be unable to explain to my children why we in this House allowed government deficits to go on and on.

● (2030)

A few years back I recall that the deficit was \$4 billion, then \$5.4 billion, then \$9 billion, then \$11 billion and this year it could be as high as \$12 billion or \$14 billion; who knows? That is why we must take action now. I ask members opposite to consider making an amendment to this bill which would reduce the amount of borrowing to \$6 billion. We can then return to consideration of this very important problem at a later stage.

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, it is the duty of every member of this House, regardless of party, to stand up at this time and express his concern over this excessive spending of our tax dollars. I congratulate the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson) on the remarks

which he made with respect to the generations which will follow us.

The present government has been in power just under three months. All we are really sure about at this point is that it will not be any different from the Liberal governments of the past 16 years. We know they have not learned anything from being in government for all those years, and that they did not learn anything when they were in opposition last year. They are still the same old crowd, devoid of ideas, short of talent and long on arrogance. They still do not answer any questions as to where we are going and what they plan to do about the serious problems which continue to plague our country.

During the last election campaign the Liberals from across the floor could list all the problems plaguing our country, and they had instant solutions for those problems. Today they cannot even remember what the problems are. When we ask about all the magic solutions which they had a few months ago, every member on that side of the House suddenly becomes tongue-tied. My distinguished colleague, the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) said in this House the other day that when it comes to answering specific questions the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) appears to be in slow motion. The finance minister and his colleagues are not in slow motion when it comes to asking this House for additional borrowing authority.

We have before us a bill comprising two paragraphs and a subparagraph requesting authority to borrow \$12 billion. This bill is hardly more than a casual gesture, yet it proposes to plunge us \$12 billion deeper into debt before we even know how the government plans to spend the money. Where are all the specific programs to back up the grand solutions which the Liberals had just a few months ago? Where is the national energy policy, the magic pricing formula promised to the Canadian public in the last campaign?

The government's energy minister seems to have run out of steam, or out of oil. Instead of a solution to our energy problems, we appear to be heading for still another head-on collision between the federal government and the provincial governments. Last week the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) accused some provincial premiers of waging war against the federal government, and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was quick to back him up. The government's so-called blended price formula for establishing domestic and foreign prices for oil seems to have run into a snag, and it is not surprising.

The energy minister approached the provinces with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude when he tried to sell the government's pricing formula. Now that he has been rebuffed, he chooses to blame the provinces. I am very concerned about the apparent failure of the government to come up with a national energy policy for a number of reasons, and I am not comforted in the least by the threat of still another clash between the federal energy minister and his counterparts in the provinces.

We are led to believe that one of the main reasons our government was defeated last December was that we proposed to raise the price of gasoline at the pumps by 18 cents per