

Borrowing Authority

we must all start to appreciate and understand the dilemma of establishing national standards at the same time as having a provincially administered federal program. Of course it is a problem, but also I point out to the government that it will be a very difficult problem in the area of university education. Just as the Pearson government recognized a national concern about medicare and its level of service, there must be a national concern about university education which goes beyond provincial jurisdiction. We should focus on that problem and ask ourselves what are the needs of universities and research institutes from a national perspective.

The government very mistakenly indicated, in the field of urban affairs, that it overstepped the mark and that it would move back. To continue that retreat, faced with some provincial rhetoric, is a very serious mistake. Not only is the relationship between the federal government and the provinces at stake, but also the over-all service and quality of the programs are involved.

Not only is the government cutting back on the activities in the province of Quebec at the University of Laval or the various universities and CEGEPs throughout the province, but it is cutting back on the activities in the province of Ontario at its various universities. For example, it is cutting back \$100 million from the University of Toronto. If the federal government thinks it can cut \$100 million from the budget of the University of Toronto, or \$600 million from the higher education budget for the province of Ontario, without a fight from those of us who are concerned about the quality of education in the province of Ontario, it is sadly mistaken. We think the federal government has a role to play in maintaining the quality of higher education and of research and development.

In closing, I ask the minister to pass on to his colleagues the importance we attach to the establishment of a task force with responsibilities for the fiscal arrangements and various economic transfers between the federal and provincial governments. It would also have the jurisdiction to look into the question of the levels and types of services being provided. In the name of financial responsibility the government may very well be cutting off its own left arm in order to satisfy the concerns of government accountants who look at deficits, and bottom lines, but not at the real nature and importance of the programs being provided.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. Before I recognize the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) I should like to ensure that there is no confusion about the proceedings we are about to follow. After the minister intro-

duced Bill C-59 for second reading and as a result of discussions between some hon. members, I recognized the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) because he needed to catch a plane this afternoon. He was, therefore, speaking out of turn and not under the provisions of Standing Order 31(1) relating to hon. members replying to the minister. That position, with the rule of unlimited time, now belongs to the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, today we commenced the debate on Bill C-59, which is a surprise addition to the government's legislative program as a result of a decision by the Chair with regard to the original version of Bill C-54, the Income Tax Act, to which was attached the borrowing authority. We raised the point that we thought it was out of order, and the Chair concurred. So now we are commencing the debate on second reading on Bill C-59, which is a very simple bill consisting of a single sheet of paper folded over, containing two clauses and four subclauses.

I suppose you have noticed, Mr. Speaker, as I have, that it is always the simple bills which have the most profound impact upon the country. In fact one could almost measure the importance of legislation in inverse ratio to the thickness of the act. The other day we had no trouble in dispensing in about half an hour with a thick bill designated to remove anomalies from existing legislation, but I think it will take a little bit more than half an hour to discuss this question of a \$14 billion borrowing authority. This is a colossal sum of money, a sum of money which literally is beyond the comprehension of normal people. It is about 50 per cent more money than was spent by the Government of Canada when the present administration was first elected some 12 years ago. It represents a staggering new edition to the national debt.

● (1410)

Mr. Speaker, I want to address my remarks today to this question of the deficit and the national debt and to what I think needs to be done, and done quickly, if we are not to saddle future generations of Canadians and future governments with obligations and restrictions which will preclude them from making life as comfortable as Canadians and the government of this era is attempting to do.

The total deficit of the Government of Canada, as published in the latest edition of the Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1980, shows the liabilities of the government at that point as a colossal \$106 billion. The accumulated deficit is \$68,600,000,000, with apparently some \$37 billion of reported assets. But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the assets you wonder if, in fact, \$37 billion is real or realizable. For example, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has \$10 billion worth of assets. As everyone well knows, those assets are sitting idle in many cities right now because of the fact that the owners of CMHC mortgaged homes have simply walked out of them. Indeed, previous auditors general have pointed out that the assets of the Government of Canada, as declared in the Public Accounts, are inaccurate. Mr. Mac-