

The following day, so ardent were the Progressive Conservatives in maintaining their principle that a borrowing authority for a current fiscal year should never contain a non-lapsing provision that they had a second "bellabuster" on March 29, 1984. We must concede that they certainly were consistent: they believed in their principles; they stuck by them; they rang the bells.

They did something else; they moved an amendment. I know that Senator Flynn does not like the words of his Conservative friend; he finds them abhorrent; but this is what they proposed:

That this House holds the opinion that the granting of a sum greater than the amount required to meet the government's needs to the end of the the current fiscal year is objectionable in principle . . .

That quotation is to be found in *Hansard* at page 2641.

Honourable senators, I ask you: Is it any wonder that the people of Canada become cynical about ourselves, the politicians? I ask you, I ask myself, is it any wonder, when these principles have been laid down so clearly and have been so persistently maintained against the former government, is it any wonder that the people become cynical about politicians?

Senator Flynn: There is no doubt about that.

Senator Stewart: The truth of the matter is that Parliament has never enacted a borrowing authority bill before the main estimates have been presented. That is the parliamentary principle demonstrated by the relevant precedents. Moreover, Mr. Wilson and his friends have opposed even non-lapsing provisions as contrary to the principles of sound parliamentary government.

Senator MacEachen has said that the opposition here is not being as rigorous as were the Progressive Conservatives, and he of course is right. What they objected to when in opposition is mirrored in Part I of this bill; yet we have said that the present government could have had that part a month ago. They could have had \$7.3 billion, notwithstanding that \$2 billion of that sum is non-lapsing. It will carry forward beyond April 1, 1985.

Notice, however, that these men of principle talk of much more than the main estimates. They say, "We must have the relevant budget." That is what the Honourable Michael Wilson said on February 22, 1983. Honourable senators, he had a point. However, the timing of a budget is a matter for which there must be flexibility.

The Honourable Michael Wilson, the present Minister of Finance, intends to bring in a budget within the next few weeks. This will be a most important budget. It overhangs our economy. I hope it does not overhang too long, because then we will hear some politicians saying that it is causing insecurity, and they will undoubtedly tie it in to the value of the Canadian dollar and other such considerations. That is what we can expect. That forthcoming budget will be a very important budget. I say to those honourable senators who scoff at

[Senator Stewart.]

the importance of the tabling of the main estimates that what they are really arguing is that we should have been much more rigorous; that we should have said, "No, in conscience we cannot give you the second part of this bill until we have seen not only the main estimates but the forthcoming budget." I plead with those honourable senators that that kind of rigid position would have been excessive. I think we save the principle by insisting upon only the main estimates.

The government is applying for the authority to borrow. Its application, like every other application for permission, ought to be in order. Its application ought to be properly supported. Merely to say, "We know that everything is going to be in order," is not an approach that any issuer of licences would ever accept. The application ought to be in order. The government ought to explain its spending intentions, just as one might say that the pilot of an airplane ought to be required to file a flight plan. To continue with my metaphor, to fill up the tank without a flight plan would be irresponsible. I know Senator Phillips will want to vary that and say that to gas up the balloon without a flight plan would be utterly irresponsible, and he would probably accuse Liberals of behaving in that way.

I have gone over these matters because I think it is fair to say that the Progressive Conservatives established that the borrowing authority bill is a very important bill. They fought the Liberal government in past parliaments on precisely this point. They were insistent. Their standards were high. What they were objecting to was non-lapsing borrowing authority, and I suspect that they were too demanding in that regard.

● (1730)

I want to go back to the beginning; I will not be long. I do not think that it is devastating to have a good debate in this chamber.

Senator Flynn: You do not contribute to a good debate.

Senator Stewart: Senator Flynn, in all likelihood, is going to give an eloquent speech, and when my poor speech is taken with his, the average will be extraordinarily high. I am counting on him for that.

Senator Roblin: You won't be disappointed.

Senator Stewart: I suspect that most of us did not come here to be sober, rubber stamps. But that is the suggestion that is being put before us. I do not think that that suggestion is being put before us maliciously. I have a good deal of sympathy for my friend, Senator Roblin. He has a tough job to do but he soldiers on and sticks to his guns. We have to admire him for that.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Stewart: I may not be from Manitoba, but we from Nova Scotia recognize a good man when we see one. He has a tough job. He reminds me of a lawyer who has been assigned a weak case; he is doing a good job of it, and we have to admire