

Borrowing Authority Act

administration has become so large that the Minister and the Government can no longer control the vast number of people under it. However, it is the same both ways. If the Government is not doing the job it should get out and let someone else in who probably could do it.

● (1720)

Mr. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the Hon. Member referred to government spending as a percentage of the GNP. I believe he said it was 17.4 per cent. I think he indicated the period 1968-69 and that it was at the same level in 1962 under a Tory government. Of course, during the course of a recessionary period such as the one we just came through, this naturally increased due to the safety nets that were put in place in society by Liberal governments over the years so that we would not have to go through the hard times that existed in the 1930s.

With respect to lack of revenue and the increased expenditures by the Government to provide these safety nets, how can the Member use that as a logical comparison when, in fact, the net public debt as a percentage of Gross National Product in 1982-83 was actually lower than it was during the Diefenbaker period in the early 1960s?

Mr. Dantzer: Mr. Speaker, I think the subject of the Diefenbaker period was raised earlier. Mr. Diefenbaker was paying for the war which we had just gone through. It is pretty understandable. As well, at that period, during the early years of the Liberal regime, the deficit was not nearly as high.

I am not saying that some of the deficit is not due to the recent recession. I am merely saying that the recession was made much worse and more harmful to Canada because of Liberal Government policies. I am also saying that the Government has not shown any will or ability to cut that deficit down in terms of the percentage of GNP. That is all I am saying.

In the relatively short period I have been here, the Government has said every year that it will cut the deficit in the next year. However, it is never done the next year but always the year following. It has done the same thing this year. The Government says it will cut the deficit next year to \$24.4 billion from \$25 billion, then to \$23.6 billion from \$24 billion and then to \$23.1 billion. Wait until next year, if the Member is still around; I bet it will go up again. That is why I suggest we cannot believe the Government or its figures when it presents a Budget.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order! Debate. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

Mrs. Eva Côté (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, with Bill C-21, the Government is asking the House for permission to borrow the monies it needs

for the proper administration, and I emphasize the words proper administration, Mr. Speaker, of the country's business.

I do not intend to elaborate on the basis for this request, which is fair and reasonable, since I believe my learned colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Mr. McRae) already did so very successfully. I would rather discuss a number of situations that prevail in my riding as they do generally across Canada, and that justify this request for supplementary borrowing authority. That the Government is asking a little more than it needs merely proves that the Government would rather be safe than sorry. The affairs of state must be administered with an eye to what the future may hold in store, and I think it is quite normal that the Government should ask the House for sufficient borrowing authority to cover its requirements.

I think it is hardly necessary to recall the state of the economy in preceding years, especially since 1981, or perhaps towards the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1981. The economic situation has become extremely difficult, and at the same time it has been necessary for the Government to protect jobs and especially to plan ahead for new generations entering the labour market. When I say that we should open up labour market opportunities, I should add that every effort ought to be made to bring back into the labour market those of our fellow Canadians who have lost their jobs.

I would like to quote a few figures on the amounts of money earmarked by the Government to meet the needs of the people in a region such as mine. If we add up all the money spent not so long ago in Eastern Quebec in particular on unemployment insurance and social assistance, we find that the Canadian Government has been paying out \$1 million every day. It seems to me that, in such circumstances, any intelligent person would eventually wonder whether those funds might be expended in a more productive and constructive way than keeping people idle and giving them unemployment insurance benefits or social welfare hand-outs. That is why we have set up very worthwhile programs by using the funds allocated under the provisions of Unemployment Insurance Act Section 38.

Mr. Speaker, a significant part of Quebec forests cover my region—the entire territory of Témiscouata, Kamouraska, Lower St. Lawrence and Gaspé—and everyone knows that it has been extensively ravaged by the spruce budworm. Thanks to the funds made available through unemployment insurance under Section 38 of the Act, we were able to carry out major reforestation and silviculture projects, to the extent that our forests have been given a new lease on life. Millions of young trees were planted, and all those projects have kept Canadians at work to ensure a much brighter future for ourselves and our children. It may have cost a little more than paying unemployment insurance benefits, but the Government and various groups of people put in additional funds to see the projects