

Borrowing Authority

Mr. Rodriguez: You are moving backwards.

Mr. Riis: The confusion which exists in the country is magnified when you hear Ministers such as the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Andre), who has just shouted out, and other Ministers time after time tell us in this House, in press releases or in interviews that they have a top priority in this Government. Some say the top priority is jobs; that is the number one concern. They are absolutely dedicated to meeting that problem head on. Another Minister says his number one priority is women's rights. Another priority is interest rate reduction and yet another is the small business sector. We have a Minister saying that her priority is reducing deficits. Then, of course, there is the priority of aboriginal rights and fair treatment for Quebec. Then a Minister tells us that the agricultural community is the priority and we hear that the fishing sector is the priority. But one cannot have 15 priorities, Mr. Speaker. There cannot be 15 number one concerns on the agenda.

It is that kind of behaviour, Mr. Speaker, which causes us in the Opposition to become less than enthusiastic about giving the Government the authority to borrow \$16 billion to take us some place; goodness knows where, Mr. Speaker. We wish we did know where. Perhaps it is in a good direction. That is a possibility, I suppose.

Mr. Rodriguez: The Tories?

Mr. Riis: It is not likely, but it is possible. We have all kinds of suspicions and all kinds of evidence which encourages us to have these suspicions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment, and I will refer later on to other amendments I would like to move. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong):

That all of the words after the word "that" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"that this House holds the opinion that the granting of an authority for the borrowing of a sum greater than the amount which is required to meet the government's needs to the end of the current fiscal year is objectionable in principle and this House therefore declines to give second reading to Bill C-11, an Act to provide borrowing authority".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It seems to me that this is about the same kind of amendment which was initially put to the House. I will take this amendment under advisement until I have ruled on the first one. I will take both amendments under advisement and we will carry on with debate.

The Hon. Member for LaSalle (Mr. Lanthier).

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Are you not finished with your speech?

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I have two or three short statements left. I did not intend to end my speech by submitting that amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All right. You are entitled to the extra two or three minutes, if you wish.

Mr. Riis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I have only two or three other points I would like to make. I wanted to say, after moving the amendment, that I move that amendment based upon the Minister's own admission that portions of the borrowing authority will be applied in the next fiscal year. It is on that basis and because we believe there is no justification on the part of this Government to have that kind of borrowing authority that I introduce that amendment.

That is a quote, Mr. Speaker, from the then Leader of the Official Opposition, the Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark), on July 19, 1982. It is found at page 19456 of *Hansard*. At that time the Speaker took the amendment under advisement and subsequently found the amendment, word for word, to be in order.

I trust, Mr. Speaker, that as a result of this amendment the Government, through the Minister of State for Finance, will reconsider its request. This was asked by the Official Opposition in 1982, government found that the request was a reasonable one and after consideration decided to practise what it had promised, which was an openness in terms of discussion on borrowing matters. I have confidence, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of the day will do the same in this case.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that my colleagues and I feel very strongly about the principles which we have discussed today. We, as members of the New Democratic Party, however, are not the only ones who feel strongly about these principles. The present Minister of Finance had this to say about the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Yellowhead. It is found in *Hansard* of July 20, 1982, at page 19513:

The first amendment we offered was to decline second reading of this bill. There is a well established principle that Parliament only provides sufficient borrowing authority to a government to allow it to finance its operations within the current fiscal year. It is quite clear from the figures in the bill and from the statement by the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Bussi eres) in response to my question yesterday that the government has every intention of this borrowing authority spilling over into 1983-84.

This is all the more reprehensible because the government has not given us any projections about what will happen in 1983-84. If things are too uncertain for it to predict what is going to happen in 1983-84, then it is too uncertain for us to give it the carte blanche freedom to go on spending money like a drunken sailor. It is for that reason that we feel the government should withdraw this bill and offer something that will allow it to live within its means. This bill is clearly objectionable. I believe that amendment must be and will be supported by other members of the House.

That was a statement made in 1982 by the present Minister of Finance. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, not too long afterwards the present Chairman of the Finance Committee, the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn), rose in his place and commented on the particular practice which the Government is now attempting to perpetuate. He said on March 7, 1984, and I quote:

It is unconscionable. It is improper. It cannot be supported by any thinking Member of the House. This House should rise up, Sir, and demand an end to this, not only on behalf of us as Hon. Members and of our constituents, but on