

Borrowing Authority

As the Budget unfolds, whether in the House or outside the House, we recognize more and more that big business, small business, labour, people on low income, people in middle income brackets all seem to be unhappy with the steps the Government took.

The suggestion I would venture to make to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and the Government with respect to their spending and revenue plans is that they respect the people of Canada enough now that the election is over to tell it like it is. I find it extremely difficult to listen to people suggest that the Opposition should explain to Canadians how to play the fiscal and monetary game. Government Members tell Canadians through their elected representatives that we should be explaining how we would tax, what we would tax, what we would not tax, what programs we would cut and what programs we would expand.

The problem with this spending request by the Government and its Budget is not just the leak and the fact that we are dealing with a lot of money, it is that Canadians pay billions of dollars into the coffers of this country on the basis of trust and credibility. Every year around this time people are much lighter in their wallets and bank accounts. Many people fill out their income tax returns on their own, and voluntarily send money to the Government. The problem is that those people who are expected to be honest in dealing with their revenue and expense matters are not at all convinced that the Government is dealing with its finances in the same way.

The reason I have great difficulty listening to some Members opposite when we get into these discussions is that it is very difficult to tell what their position was last fall. For them to ask people on this side to explain how we would go about it is a real conundrum. Last fall members of the Government had access to the books and knew the situation. The Minister of Finance told us last fall that everything was rosy and well managed. We were told that they were the people who could really take care of the finances of this country, that the Government had a proven track record.

What has become of that rosy forecast? How dare those Members suggest to us that we are being irresponsible when in the space of five or six months we have gone from a Government that says it can spend \$15 billion or \$20 billion on election promises—

Mrs. Sparrow: That is better than the \$26 billion you were talking about.

Mr. Young (Gloucester): What was that?

Mrs. Sparrow: \$26 billion.

Mr. Young (Gloucester): The fact of the matter is that what we said last fall did not wash. That is why we are sitting over here.

Mrs. Sparrow: That is right.

Mr. Young (Gloucester): You should be forthright enough, courteous enough to excuse yourself to the people of Canada for having misled them last fall. That is what you should do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I am sure the Hon. Member will speak through the Chair. It would be appreciated.

Mr. Young (Gloucester): Certainly, Madam Speaker. I hope anyone intervening would do likewise.

The situation we are faced with not only concerns borrowing money or spending money, but misrepresentation. Some want us to believe and want Canadians to believe that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) last fall did not know how bad things were. Otherwise, they misled us.

The chairman of the Finance Committee said earlier that we cannot have it both ways. Our problem in dealing with Canadians and making sure that we can maintain some trust and integrity in the system is that the Government must be far more forthright than it has been. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have often talked about the question of fairness when answering questions about the Budget. People in this country are prepared to face the reality of what the deficit and the debt are doing to Canadians. They have great difficulty, however, in believing people who try to misrepresent that some time this year, in 1989, our total debt will have doubled in the period of time, Madam Speaker, Members to your right have sat in government.

• (1540)

Within five years, the total debt will have doubled from \$170 billion, yet over and over Members ask Canadians to trust them. The Minister for International Trade two weeks ago in the House said that last fall in Newfoundland—and he was absolutely correct—there would be no changes to the UIC legislation that would be detrimental to workers in this country.