

Supplementary Borrowing Authority

money that we borrow. I understand from the hon. member for Edmonton West that it amounts to some \$39 million. In that area it seems there must be a multitude of methods for raising money other than straight taxation. It would also seem that the cost of that money would vary from time to time and from item to item. These facts are not readily available to hon. members in relation to government requests for this kind of money. The amount of \$2 billion boggles the mind. It certainly boggles my mind and I suppose it boggles the mind of pretty nearly everybody else I know. Even most of the rich people in this country have no conception of billions of dollars.

We are being asked to raise \$2 billion as an afterthought to a bill which did not have any connection at all. We are being asked to raise this amount through a bare bones bill which does not indicate the interest, where the money is to come from or where it is to go. The bill does not indicate whether this represents the total anticipated government expenditure over a certain period of time, and it does not indicate any connection with the curtailment of expenditures which the government is now preparing. It does not indicate whether it anticipates a government decision to reduce my salary or whether such a reduction will lessen the \$2 billion required. The bill does not indicate whether it anticipates a voluntary, or otherwise, 25 per cent cut in civil servants' salaries, a 10 per cent cut or a 10 per cent lay-off. It does not really tell me if such a reduction will make any change.

If my wife asked me for more money to pay for the groceries, and I found that groceries were going down in price, I would have some suspicion. If one of the kids left home and was not eating as much there, I would anticipate the grocery bill would go down. So far as this bill is concerned, it seems to me that no matter what we do, it will not make any difference to our borrowing. There is no indication that this is a final borrowing for a specified period of time. I am simply confused about what it is, and I do not think the minister will take the time to tell us today.

Many members sit here and do not really take any interest in what is going on. They would be well advised to interest themselves in what the government is doing with our money. It would seem that in an appropriation bill there should be a clearer indication of what are the expenditures. It may be possible to find this out in another way, but when we are asked to vote this kind of money it seems to me that type of information should be made available to all hon. members.

It is true that the hon. member for Edmonton West and others are members of financial committees of this House and have been involved in these matters for a number of years. They may know where to find this information. They may have officials in the treasury branch who are able to tell them about these things. I do not have that expertise or those connections with the treasury branch. But I would like to have that information, as I am sure some of my constituents and others across the country would like to have it. These sketchy explanations really do not enlighten me very much.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the hon. member would permit a question.

[Mr. Peters.]

Mr. Peters: Sure.

Mr. Friesen: I was interested in his suggestion that it is just not good fiscal practice to borrow money to pay retroactive expenditures. I recall that the former premier of British Columbia hired the former member for Skeena as a consultant in British Columbia. He hired him in December but made the hiring retroactive to November.

An hon. Member: And the hon. member for Kootenay West.

Mr. Friesen: I was wondering if, as a result of the election in British Columbia last week, the hon. member for Timiskaming has learned this and is therefore using it in the House today.

Mr. Peters: That is very interesting question, Mr. Chairman, but one that I think goes beyond the purview of this bill.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): You have learned something.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Timiskaming has raised a number of questions about the nature of the public debt. Let me say to him, in respect of the question of analysis and perspective on the public debt, the document from which the hon. member for Edmonton West read was a monthly report of the Bank of Canada which set out an analysis of outstanding Government of Canada debt, for which the Bank of Canada is the agent. The bank publishes this analysis from month to month, along with reference to any events that may have occurred during the month.

Several other questions were raised. The hon. member asked whether the money has already been spent. The answer is no, it has not. It will, of course, be spent in the first three calendar months of 1976, which is the last three months of the 1975-76 fiscal year. This will really put us in funds for the purpose of making the remaining expenditures in the heavy end of the year. The hon. member asked why it was April 1, 1975. Let me say there was an issue of Canada savings bonds, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, that was extremely well received by the public. Indeed, it overshot expectations. However, depending on the balance of redemptions, there may be a temporary case of an overrun in borrowing during this period. In the event that this has occurred, this is really a retroactive authorization in connection with such borrowings.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) and the hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) asked questions about the financing for the remainder of the fiscal year authorized under this bill. I think it cannot be said exactly what the interest rate or what the market will be, that is whether the financing will take place in Canada or on the international market, for the remainder of the year. It can be said that there will be financing made up of long term bonds on February 1 and also at that time there will be a study of the additional money for the expenditures of the government of Canada. There will also be for the same period of the remainder of the year studies of