

Oral Questions

Mr. Blenkarn: Madam Speaker, the Minister knows that the Income Tax Bill has been before the House for only three and a half days since it was introduced on December 7. The Government has been dragging its feet. The Government has been producing and pushing forward legislation that has nothing to do with the problems of the country.

PROVISION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Madam Speaker, may I ask the Minister why only last week, when he was asked about the fiscal position of the country, he said that he would be coming in with an additional borrowing bill and at that time would give up to date figures? Did he mean what he said a week ago? If so, why has he changed his mind? When will the Minister come clean with Canada?

Mr. Crosbie: The answer is never.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, if ridicule killed, there would be a lot of dead bodies on the Tory benches.

What I indicated was that if and when the borrowing authority bill is introduced, I will make a full financial statement as to the situation of the Government for 1982-83. I have said that. It is the Conservatives who yesterday prevented the adoption of the Bill on first reading and prevented me from doing it at eleven o'clock this morning as I would have if we had followed normal procedure.

If we can get to the borrowing authority Bill I will be very happy to come forward, at that time. I will be the first speaker on that Bill before anybody else is required to speak. I will give all information as to the excellent financial situation of the Government.

As far as the premise of the Hon. Member's question is concerned, I would remind him that the income tax Bill was introduced early in December, and then other very urgent legislation was presented to Parliament having to do with the six and five program. Again the Opposition filibustered those Bills day after day and we had to resort to time allocation to get them passed. The Hon. Member cannot take refuge in his argument. If the income tax Bill has not been considered more often, that is his Party's fault, and he should realize that.

DELAY IN PASSAGE OF INCOME TAX BILL

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Madam Speaker, the Minister knows that the Government controls House business. If it was important to get the income tax Bill through, why did he not bring it in for debate? The answer really is that, as a Parliament, we cannot be expected to deal with a borrowing authority bill unless we have received written projections of where we stand this year and where we are going next year, what the revenues are, what the expenses are, and what the national deficit amounts to.

An Hon. Member: What is your question?

Mr. Blenkarn: What is the deficit? Is \$26 billion borrowing required or is it not? Where are we going?

• (1420)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member said that Government controls the business of the House. The Government House Leader yesterday tried to get first reading of a Bill, which the Opposition prevented us from considering by resorting to all kinds of tactics, including challenging the rulings of Madam Speaker for two hours. That is on the record. It is quite obvious what the Opposition can do in the House to prevent it from dealing with the urgent affairs of the country. We had a very good example of this yesterday.

As far as the income tax Bill is concerned, I remind my hon. friend that for several months last summer the Parliamentary committee had the draft income tax Bill, which he himself participated a great deal in reviewing. The parliamentary Committee considered this Bill for several weeks, heard witnesses and made recommendations. I have taken most of them into account. Parliament has had plenty of opportunity to consider that legislation. Again, the Opposition should blame only itself if we are not further advanced.

As far as the last point raised by the Hon. Member is concerned, I have indicated that, as soon as we can get consideration of the borrowing authority Bill, I will be very happy to come forward with whatever figures I can in terms of fiscal year 1982-83. As far as fiscal year 1983-84 is concerned, I have to remind my hon. friend that I expect to be able to present a budget in which all the estimates for 1983-84 will be put forward.

CALL FOR INCREASED GASOLINE TAX

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday in a speech the President of Petro-Canada called for a tax increase through an increase in the price of gasoline. This morning on "Canada AM" the Minister suggested that a tax increase might be appropriate to control the size of his enormous budget. Would the Minister explain how these threats of tax increases will give Canadians any confidence whatsoever to go out to buy a new refrigerator, a new stove, or a new house?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the threats of tax increases do not come from me. The Hon. Member referred to a speech made by Mr. Hooper, I believe. I indicated that I have received many representations and suggestions, including some having to do with tax increases. At the same time I have to say—and this is what I indicated this morning—that we have to look at alternatives. If we do not want to increase the deficit, obviously we have to look at the possibility of increasing revenues. We cannot do like the Tories are trying to do all the time, having their pie and eating it too; is that the expression?

Some Hon. Members: Cake.