

Borrowing Authority

track and turn the wheels of our economy. He refused to appear, and had Governor Bouey, a qualified official of course whose job is to advise the government and the Minister of Finance, stick his neck out to have it chopped. Mr. Speaker, I am not concerned about Governor Bouey, he is an economist and a distinguished finance man who I am sure is doing his utmost to get us out of this mess. However, Mr. Speaker, it was not governor Bouey whom we wanted to see before the committee on finance so much as the Minister of Finance so that he could explain these new criteria or parameters which will guide the budgetary policy of this government for the duration of its mandate, which I must say, had a very bad start.

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the Speech from the Throne contained all sorts of promises to the effect that the government would introduce a whole set of measures to help our legislative body, the House of Commons and Senate, to make more enlightened judgments about government expenditures. We had been promised a whole set of measures! We had been promised the famous sunset laws through which we could re-evaluate government programs every ten years and go back to the basics regularly and periodically and decide whether these numerous programs, budgets, votes and credits were justified or not. We had been promised a revamping of the estimates format, and we had hoped that the supplementary estimates could have been submitted in the same format.

Finally, we had been promised three-year estimates of government expenditures and projects so that this House could have a more comprehensive view of such estimates and be in a better position to judge the government's general orientation. We had been promised that the budgetary envelopes would make it easier to allocate the budgets required for the operation of the administrative machine for each major sector of government business.

We have had many promises! But where are those documents, those bills, those mechanisms which were supposed to make us go back to the basics and allow us to make enlightened judgments? Mr. Speaker, in Bill C-10 we have the same formula of a blank cheque for \$7 billion and we are asked to decide out of thin air once again, because, as I said earlier, \$7 billion is such a large and incredible amount that no one can imagine what it really means in dollars and cents. Once again, we are presented with a bill which will allow the Minister of Finance to decide according to his own criteria and priorities, that is the government's and not those of the House of Commons, what the government will do until a budget is rendered. And this budget, what will it include, when, why, and under which format will it be presented to the House?

Mr. Speaker, I am greatly disappointed with the fact that this renewal which we had been promised with such clamour is unfortunately so very long in coming.

I am one of those parliamentarians who have suffered in the past from the complexity of the estimates submitted to us in committee and from the difficulty in obtaining the required

information. No particular government is to blame. That was the way things were, and the tradition being what it is in this august assembly, it is often quite difficult to keep in mind what is essential, the purpose or the main reason for our presence in this House, namely to give the government the financial means to achieve its aims.

I suffered from that, Mr. Speaker, and I viewed of course the government's promises as a formula to be discussed, a technical means, a mechanism that would enable us to do our job better. I am disappointed because the new government which promised the Canadian people to make a clean sweep of all those practices, all those old mechanisms and all that antiquated budgetary machinery, is still operating like all the others and is content with obsolete procedures without putting before us, before you, Mr. Speaker, the new proposals they were flaunting so much during the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, in all probability the Minister of Finance will most certainly get that borrowing authority of \$7 billion. There is no other alternative in any case. There is nothing we can do because the government must keep on operating. But having said that, let the government put forward what they promised, let it establish its credibility. Once again, the performance of the Minister of Finance to date has not been good enough to make us feel confident about putting such large amounts in the hands of this surging, sailing government, as I said earlier—

Mr. Breau: Winding.

Mr. Lachance: Winding, indeed, my colleague from Gloucester said the word I was looking for. Winding, that is the proper word for this kind of devious government that comes up with amounts, that changes its direction, that comes up from one day to the next with inconsistencies and particularly that refuses to meet with the elected representatives of the people in a committee of the House to discuss specifically with the Canadian public and before them its general orientation, the great changes it had proposed. Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no alternative, we shall have to give them \$7 billion, but I urge the government, particularly the Minister of Finance, to spend wisely this money that the House of Commons is going to give him to keep the government machinery in operation. I urge him to be accountable for that amount he will receive, more accountable than with the kind of devious and evasive answers he gives constantly in the House to the legitimate questions of the opposition parties, whether it is my party, the Liberal party or the NDP. He should give us answers, Mr. Speaker, instead of saying all the time that it is Tom, Dick and Harry's fault, that it is the fault of the previous government. How long is he going to play the same record, Mr. Speaker? One year, two, three or four years? I feel he is going to play the same record until the Canadian people are tired of the attitude of the government, Mr. Speaker.