

Borrowing Authority

economic undertaking. This country is second to none in terms of its resource capacity and its ability to be self-sufficient both in energy and in food. We have access to two entire worlds, the Pacific rim on one side and the European sphere on the other.

Before you rise to your feet, Mr. Speaker, let me say that with that potential and with proper management of our finances, I am confident that this country will go ahead by leaps and bounds. If the Government were kind enough to heed what we are asking for, we could achieve the goals we are setting.

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments on this legislation. It is one thing to be asked to okay a \$19 billion spending Bill, although that figure is so large that even Members of this House of Commons cannot grasp the significance of it. It is something else entirely to be asked to approve the borrowing of that amount of money without any information as to how, when or where it will be spent. That is what I find most offensive about this legislation.

We have been asked to sign a blank cheque. The Government wants \$5 billion for the current fiscal year, which ends in approximately five weeks. We have already been asked to grant authority to borrow \$14 billion for fiscal 1983-84. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) has suggested that, depending on the economy, that amount might last until mid-summer.

It is madness to ask Members elected to this House of Commons to deal with figures that we cannot in good conscience grapple with. We are asked to pass this legislation when we have no idea in the world where the money will be spent. That is not only true of Opposition Members but of Members on the Government side as well.

The amount of the borrowing will have a very dramatic effect on the business community over the next number of months. It may threaten the recovery we all hope will take place. It will fuel inflationary expectations as we look further into 1983. This will have a direct effect on other segments of the economy which will have to compete with the federal Government when borrowing money. This will not only affect how Canadians view their Government but people outside Canada. The credibility of the Government in the whole area of economics has been totally shattered.

In 1981 the then Minister of Finance, now Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), budgeted for a \$10.5 billion deficit for the 1982-83 year. Seven months later that figure was revised to \$19.6 billion. By October of that same year the deficit had increased to \$22.6 billion, and it is still climbing. Today we are talking of a budget deficit in the neighbourhood of \$27 billion. Many people now believe that the budget deficit will go as high as \$30 billion. The figures are becoming astronomical. They do not mean anything to the Canadian people. Canadians do not realize where we are going. They only know that we are in very serious financial trouble.

This Government thought its financial requirement for this year would be \$6.6 billion. It is total madness for the Government to come to us now and ask for, in effect, a blank cheque. It is, in effect, saying: "Pass this legislation and trust us".

Surely, this is not the way to run a country. Given the Government's track record, how could we support such a request without proper documentation? Back in 1982, the then Minister of Finance, the Hon. Allan MacEachen, indicated before the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs on May 31, 1982, and I quote:

● (1440)

I do not think it would be appropriate to ask the House for additional borrowing authority until I have laid out in some detail an update of both the economic situation and the fiscal situation.

At page 20081 of *Hansard* of October 27, 1982, the present Minister of Finance said this, and I quote:

In the budget I intend to present early in 1983, I will review again the fiscal situation for the current fiscal year, set out estimates for 1983-84 and future fiscal years, and then seek additional borrowing authority as required.

Obviously, that has not happened and, Mr. Speaker, we are going to take as long a period of time as necessary in dealing with this particular legislation because we do not know where we are going. We do not know what we are doing, and I believe the Canadian people do not deserve this kind of representation from their elected Members of Parliament.

This is the largest borrowing in Canadian history which we have been asked to comment on. The \$19 billion which we are talking about today equals total federal Government spending for 1973-74. When I was first elected in the fall of 1970, Mr. Speaker, total federal Government spending was only \$15.8 billion. Today it is estimated at \$88 billion. The \$19 billion which we have been asked to comment on and give our approval to means, Mr. Speaker, that the Government wants to borrow for six months the equivalent of \$3.16 billion per month, or \$100 million per day, or \$4.5 million per hour for every 24-hour day. We are spending money at that great rate in this country without any direction as to how the money should be spent.

The Government has failed to give us leadership, not only in the economy but in the area, for instance, of training Canadians for skilled jobs. This is all part of the economy. Newspapers are filled with ads at the present time offering employment to Canadians, but they have to be skilled. We have not made the transition yet in terms of training Canadians for skilled work. We have no industrial strategy to show us exactly where we are going.

I would like to comment briefly on the effect of the mismanagement which has taken place in this country. Of course, I am better able to comment on my own constituency of Lisgar in southern Manitoba. The mismanagement of this Government in my particular part of the country has caused a tremendous degree of uncertainty and low morale. There is indecision as to what will happen in the future even in terms of the coming spring. There is no trust in Government, or Government institutions, and that may be, Mr. Speaker, one of the worst results of the Government's mismanagement. It has caused a general lack of the objectivity which is going to be needed if