

A moment or two should be taken to consider another of the Tory election promises which is both highly discriminatory and ill-conceived—the measure introduced in this House on Monday to extend the supplementary pensions of widows aged between 60 and 65. This popular piece of legislation has a relatively small price tag attached to it and I suppose, when we are talking in billions in the present borrowing authority bill, the few million dollars involved to help widows and widowers is not a particularly large item. On the surface, this legislation is not likely to be criticized. What I want to do is to illustrate again just how discriminatory and unjust is the Tory approach to popular government.

Take, as an example, three widows of the same age, say 60 or 61, living side by side in similar small apartments. None of them ever worked when they were raising families, and none of them has any appreciable income. However, only one of those widows will benefit from the legislation which the government introduced on Monday. Why? The widow in apartment No. 1 was 59 when her 65-year-old husband died. The husband of the widow in apartment No. 2 died before his 65th birthday. Only the widow in apartment No. 3 is entitled to a pension, and the other two ladies must ask for welfare from the provincial government in order to live. It is surely infinitely preferable that all persons in similar circumstances are treated alike. It is this discriminatory attitude of the Conservative government which I find to be so abhorrent.

Let me ask what has happened to the budget of the new Minister of Finance? The Tory government could not have found too much wrong with the budget of the previous government. It is reintroducing the measures contained in that budget and taking some six months to introduce its own ideas. Do the Tories have any new ideas?

● (2030)

**Mr. Stollery:** No.

**Mr. Herbert:** Why are we not given the government's forecasts of revenues and expenditures for this year? I ask this question specifically because of this request for additional authority to borrow funds. Should we not first ask the Minister of Finance what he is going to do with the requested borrowing authority? Was it not a seatmate of the minister's who suggested to the previous minister of finance that Parliament should not blindly hand borrowing authority to the government?

While I am referring to the colleague of the Minister of Finance, the present President of the Treasury Board, is it not extraordinary what a flip-flop he has done since the last Parliament? He was the critic who stoutly maintained that our dollar should be boosted to a level of 88 cents to 92 cents U.S. He was the man who stated that it was his party's economic strategy to boost our dollar to that level. Yesterday in the House he suddenly saw the light. The President of the Treasury Board, now in power in the government, said he had no choice but to admit that the fiscal policy of the previous government as it pertained to a floating dollar was the right policy, and that which was being adopted by his Tory party.

### *Borrowing Authority*

What a change of heart from the criticisms he levelled at the previous government right here in this House!

Certainly interest rates are at an unprecedented level. If the Tories were indignant when the rate was 9 per cent, should they not be doubly indignant now that the rate is approaching double that figure? Only this week the prime bank rate in the United States reached 15 per cent, and last night the governor of the Bank of Canada raised the bank rate to a record 14 per cent. What is it going to be like in Canada in the bleak winter months ahead?

At the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs this morning the governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Gerald Bouey, defended his actions and the actions of the Bank of Canada in his usual, calm, and efficient manner. I have been a member of the finance committee for seven years, and having listened to Mr. Bouey regularly year after year and having tremendous esteem for this man—not necessarily always agreeing with his point of view but respecting his ability—one thing was sure. We knew when Mr. Bouey came to the meeting this morning just about exactly what his position was going to be, what position he was going to be taking, why he was doing what he was doing, and what his responsibilities were.

Mr. Gerald Bouey naturally defended his actions and the actions of the Bank of Canada, and he did so in a very calm and a very efficient manner. However, it was abundantly evident that Mr. Bouey's statement and arguments related to his specific responsibilities. He said, and I quote: "The government must take the ultimate responsibility for the general thrust of monetary policy". Mr. Bouey went on to add also that the government must explain its policy to Parliament and to the people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we also thought that. That is why we members of the opposition parties were very anxious to hear from the Minister of Finance in committee. That is why we thought it was he, and he alone, who should explain the general thrust of monetary policy and why he, and he alone, should explain to the people of this country the government's policy concerning monetary policy. Also, interestingly enough, the views of members of all parties were represented in the steering committee report, which was ultimately rejected by the government majority.

I might say here, as I said earlier in my opening remarks, that it is certainly contrary to any rules of this Parliament, and certainly contrary to any past practice, that a minister of the Crown would dictate to a standing committee of this House. I must say, and I have said this to several hon. members opposite, that there have always been difficulties in the past in getting ministers to attend committees, and we are well aware that ministers will always find some excuse for not turning up on a particular date, but it is the manner in which this was handled that I find so extraordinary.

It was not a question of the minister's saying, "I am going to be out of town". In fact, the way it was presented to him was simply, "When can you appear, on what date and at what time?" I suggest that that is about as open an invitation as can