

Borrowing Authority

In summary, I believe the Main Estimates tabled on March 2 represent a further significant contribution to the Government's record of expenditure management. This is the third consecutive year that the growth rate in the Main Estimates has declined. This year's increase is the lowest in a quarter of a century. In 1987-88 the size of the Public Service will be at its lowest level since 1980-81. This track record clearly reflects this Government's strong commitment to sound management and to the operation of an efficient and effective Public Service while maintaining and even expanding some programs which serve the real needs of Canadians.

I say we should look at the facts and look at the record. Rather than listening to an NDP spokesman, a Liberal spokesman or even myself, let us look at what the Auditor General has said about the control of spending throughout these years. For the period 1972 until 1975, the Auditor General commented on the last year that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance. He was deeply concerned that Parliament and, indeed, the Government had lost or was close to losing effective control of the public purse. Financial management and control in the Government of Canada was grossly inadequate. That was the record established by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition and the Liberals, and that is the kind of financial situation they want to bring back should they become the Government.

Now let us look at what the Auditor General said this past October. In tabling his report he said that his sense was that there is an interest in better accountability and better management. He went on to say that he believed Members of Parliament and the taxpayers of Canada should be heartened by the genuine improvements. That is our record. We have seen the Liberal record and now we have seen our record over the last three years. I would put our record on the line any time. It speaks for itself and the comments of the Auditor General then and now support that record 100 per cent.

I have to say to the Hon. Member for Trinity, or any opposition Members, but particularly those in the Liberal Party, that I challenge them to tell it like it is. Let us hear all of the facts, not just the things they want to talk about. Let them not speak out of all sides of their mouths at the same time. They cannot do it. How can they say spend less, yet add to existing programs, increase training and transfer payments, and at the same time reduce the deficit? That cannot be done. I ask Hon. Members in the Liberal Party to start telling it like it is, given these facts. If they want to be critical, let us have some constructive criticism. Let them tell us what they would do if they were in our position today. I think they would find our approach is working extremely well.

Look at the economic indicators, the spending controls put in place by this Government, and the deficit reduction. Look at what is happening in the economy. Look at what outsiders are saying about Canada. The Japanese sent a study group here in 1976 and they were very disheartened. They could not recommend investment in Canada. However, last November they were here again and they said things have changed. This

Government has brought spending under control. It now makes sense to invest in Canada. Therefore it is not just government spokesmen saying that. The Auditor General said it, the facts say it, and outsiders are saying it.

I ask members of the Opposition to get their act together and give us some constructive criticism in harmony with the facts. They will find that what we are trying to do goes in the right direction. Sure, we might cut less in one area and more in another. I am willing to look at that and debate it. However, we can start being honest about the facts. Let us stop playing politics with the Canadian taxpayer and the Canadian economy and start telling it like it is.

Therefore I commend this Bill for speedy passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions or comments.

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, after that tirade one wonders whether one should even question the self-righteous in this House. Canadians are not totally convinced that this Government is all perfection, as the Hon. Member says. I do not think they will turn those thoughts around very quickly. Can the Hon. Member explain why the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), in August of 1984, in Toronto, went on the record saying that a Conservative Government would reduce the deficit by cutting government expenditures and not by increasing taxes. Canadians know that individual taxes have gone up 53 per cent since the Government took office. Everyone knows that the cuts in spending have taken place in important organizations and government institutions in Canada. The Government is even putting the long-term energy future of this country at stake. There have been drastic cuts in the field of science and technology. However, during the 1984 election campaign the Minister of Finance said his Party would not increase taxes to pay the deficit, but would cut government expenditures in order to reduce the deficit.

• (1200)

The Hon. Member concluded his remarks with great oratorical rhetoric. I want to tell him that the rhetoric he used at the end of his speech is the rhetoric Canadians are becoming used to from the Government. I will let the Hon. Member respond to that important question. I will ask him a second question if I have the opportunity.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, there are two or three elements to the Hon. Member's question. The first concerns the reduction of the deficit without taxation and the second deals with some of the cuts. I noticed the Hon. Member watching me toward the end of my remarks when I said that we can debate whether cuts in one area are more or less appropriate than cuts in another area. I agree that it is fine to debate the appropriateness of specific cuts in certain areas. However, at the same time it must be agreed that we should make progress in reducing the deficit. I assume that is what the Hon. Member meant and, therefore, was following my suggestion to