

Borrowing Authority Act

evidence of excessive demand in the economy, either in the government sector, the private sector, or from consumer demand. That statement has to be made. It is many times said, almost as an incantation of faith, that the current deficit is causing major inflation and that we have to raise taxes in order to fight it. That is an incantation of faith which has no basis in fact. The fact is the general level of demand in the Canadian economy is dropping, dropping dramatically and dropping seriously. This is no time for the government to be contemplating, in any way, shape or form, tax increases which would only have the effect of hurting the average Canadian and of hurting the level of growth in our society.

It is all very well for the Minister of Finance to talk about inflation being public enemy No. 1, or the major problem facing the Canadian economy. Of course it is a major problem. Let me suggest to the government opposite that it was an obsession with the deficit and an obsession with using monetary and fiscal policy in order to fight inflation that led to the defeat of the Conservative government in December, 1979. The Liberal Party of Canada was not elected as a government in order to raise taxes at the present time, or to reduce expenditures at the present time, or to dramatically reduce the deficit at the present time. That was not the message the hon. member for Windsor West took to the Canadian people at that time. Nor is it the message that the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans) and the hon. member for Timmins-Chapleau (Mr. Chénier), who has been so noisy this evening, took to them. The message they took was quite the opposite. Their message was that people were important, that the Tory budget was unfair and that they would not introduce the same budget. They have broken faith with the Canadian people more than once.

● (2110)

I want to give notice to the government that we will fight every inch of the way any effort by this government to tax the Canadian people in a punitive way as our economy is heading into a serious recession. It is economic suicide. It may be politically popular in some circles, possibly for those whose financial help keeps the heads of those in the Liberal party and the Tory party above water, but that is not the reason they were elected. It is certainly not the reason we were elected to Parliament and we have no intention of letting them get away with it.

Mr. Roger Simmons (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-30 on which we are to vote in the next half hour or so will give the government borrowing authority in the order of 12—

Mr. Taylor: On a point or order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not our turn to speak at this time?

Mr. Anguish: I believe it is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With all due respect, there is a division between two sides of the House. I understand a certain

number were recognized on one side and on the other side. I am not aware that there is any break in the order.

Mr. Taylor: There was a PC speaker, then a Liberal speaker and then there was an NDP speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to hear what the hon. member who just intervened has to say on this subject. Since we on this side have been asked so many questions by those in opposition, I think we should take some time to respond and give our side of the story. I would like to talk for a few minutes about the bill before us, which would give the government borrowing authority of \$12 billion for the fiscal year 1980-81.

I listened with some interest to the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), who unfortunately is not now in his seat. I see he is elsewhere in the chamber. He talked a great deal about how much the government has spent over the last 12 years. I wonder why he chose 12 years as opposed to some other number, why he did not go back a little further. Had he gone back just a few more years he would have been able to talk about a party in government of his own particular stripe, a Tory government.

When he was lamenting the size of the deficit being in the order of 24 per cent or 25 per cent, he could have made a very good comparison with another government, a Tory government, which sat in office here in Ottawa between 1957 and 1962. It had a deficit of something around 34 per cent, not 24 per cent or 25 per cent.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Simmons: That member very conveniently chose his time period. He wanted to avoid talking about that period of government. I can understand that he did not want to talk about the eight months of interim government led by the hon. member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark). Perhaps it is not fair to make too many comparisons. However, when he wants to go back ten or 12 years, I invite him to go back 16 or 17 and give us a fair comparison and tell us how high the deficit was. Before he goes looking, I can tell him the percentage was 34 per cent under the last Tory government, save that of the hon. member for Yellowhead, not 24 per cent or 25 per cent.

The very first requirement of any member who stands before this House is that he give the facts in some balanced manner, that he not misrepresent his case before the House. I submit the hon. member for Assiniboia did exactly that. He misrepresented the case of government spending over the past few years. I invite him to set the record straight on that.

If the hon. member wants to talk about Liberal spending and Liberal programs versus Tory programs, I will spar with him any day of the week. If he wants to talk about what the Liberals are doing for the people of Canada today, let me pick a specific example. We just kept a commitment, and I get a smile from some of the guys on the other side who kept raising questions—