

Financial Institutions

should perhaps look askance at what the Hon. Member for Yukon has just tried to do in preventing Hon. Members on the Government side from making a modest contribution.

Mr. Nielsen: Your House Leader asked for the Bill.

Mr. Collenette: In fact, we know that it is urgent legislation. Whether it goes to Committee at ten minutes to four or at 4.30 p.m. is really irrelevant.

Mr. Thacker: Or next week.

Mr. Collenette: The whole purpose of debate is to state one's views and to be satisfied that all Hon. Members have at least participated and made their concerns known.

I am a Member of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. There is a meeting taking place right now which I was to attend at 3.30 p.m., but I felt that participation in this debate was of such importance that I must speak, and I am now late for that very important meeting.

Mr. Nielsen: Tell your Government House Leader that.

Mr. Collenette: This particular piece of legislation is obviously very germane to the work of the External Affairs Committee. In fact, this morning the chairman, the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme), told the Committee that we had a high degree of expectation that we would be seized of this Bill later this day. I can assure the Hon. Member on the other side, the Hon. Member for Yukon, that it is not my intention or, I am sure, the intention of any of my colleagues on this side to delay unduly the passage of this Bill.

Mr. Nielsen: You already have.

Mr. Collenette: I would like to remind the Hon. Member for Yukon that Hon. Members on the Government side have rights as well.

Mr. Nielsen: Your Government House Leader asked for the Bill.

Mr. Collenette: One particular point I wanted to address related to the origins of this Bill. If the House Leader for the—

Mr. Nielsen: So much for the urgency of it.

Mr. Collenette:—Opposition would be quiet, I was about to pay a compliment to a Member of his own Party—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Collenette:—one who does not receive compliments from this side of the House very often, and that is the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre), who raised a very important procedural point which resulted in Madam Speaker ruling that an item in the Estimates was out of order and that the Government had to bring in legislation to cover that particular item. Those of us who are concerned about procedure—and I assume that the Hon. Member for Yukon has some concern with parliamentary procedure—have felt for a

number of years that items were being presented in the Estimates which perhaps should have been presented in statutory form, in legislative form, on the floor of the House. I think it is a tribute, in a sense, to the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre that he raised this matter and that the Speaker agreed with him. Hence, we have this particular piece of legislation.

I am glad the Hon. Member for Yukon has regained his composure, since I was complimenting one of the Members of his own Party.

Mr. Nielsen: We want to give you the Bill. Why are you holding it up?

Mr. Collenette: In essence, the ruling that Madam Speaker made was that the appropriation legislation could not be used to seek authority to establish new programs or activities. With the establishment of VIA Rail a few years ago, we saw how this particular technique was used and we now have a situation where we have a national passenger rail corporation in Canada without statutory authority. I must say in all due respect to the Government that it is taking steps to remedy the situation in its undertaking to present to the House of Commons a VIA Rail Act at some point in the near future. So that was the origin of this particular Bill.

In order to meet Canada's obligations to various international financial institutions for the fiscal year 1981-82, a separate Bill, Bill C-74, was introduced a year ago last June which closely followed the wording of the deleted votes and provided program authority. Since no ongoing statutory authority exists at present, appropriations for 1982-83 could not be included in the Main Estimates for the current fiscal year.

I would like to refer briefly to the particular institutions in question. I draw the attention of Hon. Members to the fact that we are seeking appropriations for the Caribbean Development Bank, the Asian Development Fund, the Inter-American Development Fund and the African Development Fund, among others. As vice-chairman of the House of Commons subcommittee dealing with Latin America and the Caribbean, I want to say a few words about this particular matter, because the whole question of overseas development aid from Canada at this particular time is a contentious one in this country.

There are those in Canada who believe that, with economic conditions as they are, we in this country should not be increasing our commitment or, indeed, maintaining the level of our commitment to overseas development aid and to international financial institutions. This is perhaps a logical, rational argument, but it is certainly not a humanitarian one nor a Liberal one, and Hon. Members on this side of the House will do all possible to ensure that our overseas development aid is not cut at this particular time of need. If the argument can be made that the world and Canada are in a great recession, then we must surely increase our overseas development aid, not cut it. If things are tough in this country, think how things are much tougher in some of the poorer countries in the world.