

knows perfectly well that I am not in a position to amend or comment on that statement, and even if I were, I would not do so.

Senator MacEachen: The Leader of the Government is very hesitant. He certainly does not have the confidence Senator Flynn has, who said that they were hesitant before budget night but today they are not hesitant. The Leader of the Government has shown an indication of hesitation because he is sowing the seeds for possible change in that rather defensive answer.

I thank him for his solicitude about my experiences, which I always find challenging, but I never find it possible to operate and speak "without the slightest hesitation" while at the same time saying that I am "hesitant." That is what the Prime Minister did yesterday.

Perhaps the leader would reflect upon a further statement made by the Prime Minister. Anybody who has any doubt about the intention of the government will have that doubt removed as a result of this statement by the Prime Minister, because the Prime Minister now has put the Minister of Finance in complete uncertainty by his statement on this particular measure. That statement is found at page 5676 of *House of Commons Debates*, and reads as follows:

The Budget proposals on limiting indexation are not in effect at this time and will not come into effect until January 1 of next year—

But listen to this, honourable senators:

—and if we do proceed with this measure, the initial effects thereof could not be felt until April, 1986.

Senator Frith: Bye-bye Michael Wilson!

Senator MacEachen: Will the Leader of the Government now confirm that the government may not proceed with this measure at all, that the hesitation that prevailed before the budget is still threatening the government, still making the government nervous? Will the Leader of the Government now say that the government will go ahead with this de-indexation measure? Can he say that?

Senator Flynn: Idle words.

Senator Roblin: I wonder whether, when he [*the then Mr. MacEachen*] presented his budget in the other place, he was asked if he intended to proceed with his measures.

Senator Frith: Why have an inquiry into Senator MacEachen's budget? Why not talk about this budget?

Senator Roblin: I would like to profit from Senator MacEachen's experience.

Senator Frith: But you will get to the question eventually.

Senator Roblin: I cannot recall a Minister of Finance in my time, with the exception of Walter Gordon, who had more trouble with budgets than did Senator MacEachen. So, when he—

Senator Frith: Just take a look at Michael Wilson's.

Senator Roblin: —asks questions about changing policy or changing my mind, I am only one of 39, and I am certainly not going to enunciate government policy on this matter in the Senate, because I have no right or authority to do so.

Senator Frith: You are talking about everything but the subject.

Senator Roblin: I have to point out to my honourable friend that his experience is illustrative, and we hope we will not make as many mistakes as he did.

Senator MacEachen: Unfortunately, while the Leader of the Government is not obliged to talk about past policies; he is obliged to talk about present policies. He is so uncertain about those that he cannot stay on that ground; he has to go back four years and talk about past experience.

I am asking the leader if he is able to tell us today that this measure will proceed. Can he tell us that, clearly and simply? Can he give us a "yes" or "no" answer to that?

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Roblin: When my honourable friend answered questions relating to his budget he did not answer categorical questions of that sort, when there had been a plain statement by the Prime Minister that the matter was under review.

The matter is under review, and those are the exact words that were used, the right words. We will develop our policy as we think the situation requires. We have a proposition before the Canadian people. That, at the present time, is the policy of the government. If the government decides to change that policy my friend will be informed in due course. Speaking at the present time, and speaking as I know the situation, I say that this is the policy of the government, that we will bring these measures in, but we will not do so in a blind, insensitive and—

● (1430)

Senator Frith: Confusing.

Senator Roblin: We will deal with it in a good, calm—

Senator Frith: Uncertain, hesitant. We are just trying to give the honourable senator some extra words.

Senator Roblin: When I have to borrow words from the honourable senator, that will be a hard day as far as I am concerned.

Senator Frith: I am just offering them; they do not have to be accepted.

Senator Roblin: My vocabulary is as good as the honourable senators, and much more to the point and sensible, so I advise my honourable friend to keep out of this discussion, because it is not his question. If he wants to answer a question, he can stand on his feet and do so and no doubt he will.

Senator Frith: Ask me one.

Senator Roblin: I am not going to ask the honourable senator a question—

Senator Frith: Make up your mind.