

THE BUDGET

SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The house resumed, from Wednesday, December 21, consideration of the motion of Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance) that Mr. Speaker do now leave the chair for the house to go into committee of ways and means, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Benidickson.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Regier) I should like to ask the house to consider the amendment which was moved by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Benidickson) when this debate was before the house at its last sitting. The amendment was not placed before the house at the time because of the reservation which I had in my own mind as to the form of amendment which, as hon. members will note if they refer to the proceedings of our last sitting at page 1046 of *Hansard*, contains a substantial preamble which quotes the words of various members of this house on both sides.

I have spent a considerable amount of time in reviewing the amendments which have been made on supply and ways and means motions in the past, and have a fairly good idea of what the practice of the house has been over the last 90 years or more—it has changed somewhat from time to time—and I have come to a tentative conclusion, which perhaps I might express as a tentative conclusion and then hear hon. members who may wish to assist in the settlement of this rather interesting and, in my opinion, important procedural question; or I shall be glad to hear them first.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the better course will be to hear the members who wish to speak. I think I might give the choice to the hon. member who moved the motion or to someone from that side of the house to support it, and then hear the reply in the second place.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillinge): Personally, Mr. Speaker, I would have preferred to hear your tentative conclusion on the subject in order to abbreviate the argument as much as possible. However, in the circumstances I intend to deal with the argument put forward by the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell), which was brief and which seemed to me to be wholly wrong.

The hon. member for Carleton rested his case mainly on two points. One was that the amendment was vague. That is something which I do not admit for a minute. But even

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if it is vague I submit that in the light of Beauchesne's citation 202 in the fourth edition, paragraph 4, that circumstance does not in the least invalidate the amendment. That citation reads as follows:

(4) An amendment cannot be ruled out because of its vagueness. Speaker Cockburn, having to give a ruling on an amendment to the address, on March 30, 1870, said: "the amendment is certainly very vague, but I cannot say the house cannot express a vague opinion".

But, Mr. Speaker, of course there is nothing vague about the amendment, with the possible exception of citations from members of the treasury benches opposite which are part of the preamble. If the hon. member for Carleton chooses to regard those statements as vague, of course that is his privilege. However, we put them in this amendment precisely because we thought they were far from vague. We thought they were precise and precisely wrong.

I now come to the other objection that was made by the hon. member for Carleton, namely that the amendment is long. May I say that the amendment is not as long as are some of the amendments that have been made in the fairly recent past, as no doubt Your Honour's researches have shown; and I am not going back beyond the year 1930 in this regard. Moreover, Your Honour indicated that you had some doubts about the recitation of argument and other matters which are properly the subject of debate. Perhaps at the same time I could deal with the question of the length of the amendment and the question of the recitation of argument in presenting these points.

At the time the point first came up for consideration I drew Your Honour's attention to the amendment moved by Mr. Heenan, the then member for Kenora-Rainy River, in the year 1932, which is reported in the *Journals* at page 76 for that year, and which cites in considerable number not precise statements made by ministers of the crown but press reports of statements made by ministers of the crown in order to substantiate the substantive part of the resolution. While I should like very much to read the citations, because they are exceedingly relevant to the situation in Canada, the reading of them would perhaps not be relevant to the point of order. Moreover, I have no doubt that Your Honour has already read them. The effect of them is, of course, to substantiate the substantive motion.

In addition, in the second session of 1930, which was the first session held after the election of that year, on September 18, as reported at page 29 of the *Journals*, an amendment was moved by Mr. Mackenzie King to a motion to go into committee of ways and