

standing of the plight of the Canadian taxpayer. The Canadian taxpayer has carried and is still carrying a crushing burden. He is round-shouldered carrying it—yes, and he is the man who has been cajoled into thinking he might now expect a lightening of that heavy load.

The Canadian taxpayer in many cases is living on a fixed income under a wage ceiling or a salary ceiling. He has had no increase in income, no opportunity to put anything by during the war years. Indeed, great numbers of our taxpayers have been living in the red because taxation and the cost of living have taken more than they have been able to earn under ceilings. The cost of living has been going up, and I am not in the slightest degree impressed by the government's babbling about the way they have held down that cost, because the official cost-of-living index is so much nonsense. It is eyewash. There is not a housewife in this country who is prepared to accept the statement that the cost of living since the war began has increased only twenty per cent. She knows better because that cost of living index does not take into account deterioration in the quality of the goods she has to buy and the fact that she has to pay a higher price for goods of the same quality which, previously, she was able to buy at a lower price.

That same round-shouldered taxpayer has been burning himself out during the war. There are tens of thousands of men throughout the length and breadth of the country whose lives, and certainly the period of whose earning power, have been greatly curtailed by the exertions they made during the war. Everyone, or nearly everyone, has been doing his best, and many a man working under these ceilings has shortened the period of his earning life.

The Minister of Finance keeps coming back to the statement—in fact, it has become almost a fetish with him—that there is more money in the banks than before the war. I do not know who the people are who have all the money in the banks, but I should like the minister to know that it must be in the hands of people I do not know, because the people I come in contact with are people who have been on low frozen incomes during the war, on whom the burden of taxation has been grievous. They have not any larger bank accounts, and, in fact, great numbers of them have hardly any bank account at all. But, as I say, it has become a sort of fetish with the Minister of Finance. He has persuaded himself that a duty rests upon him to relieve the people of these great surpluses which they

[Mr. Fleming.]

are supposed to have in the banks. That has been carried too far. Whoever planted that idea in the mind of the Minister of Finance has done him no great service, and it is a pity that by reason of the heavy burden he has been carrying he should be misled in that way. I should be the last person—and I say this in all frankness—to minimize in any sense the size of the load he has been carrying, but it is a pity that he has not been freer or has not taken the opportunity to go around and get into closer contact with the people who are paying the taxes that he imposes. It would have a beneficial effect on his approach to these problems.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Finance has become a prisoner of the bureaucrats. It is a pity that a little refreshing contact with the people who have to pay the taxes is not possible for him. Such a contact would have a salutary effect in restoring a perspective which I fear the right hon. gentleman has lost.

The Minister of Finance has trumpeted the fact that next year about a quarter of those who now pay income tax will not be doing so. Well, there will still be about 1,750,000 people left paying income taxes and sharing that burden with their families. Is that the whole story? It is far from the whole story. I wish some of those eloquent spokesmen for the government, including the Minister of National Defence, who made his maiden speech to-day as Acting Minister of Finance, would give the house some inkling as to how the burden of hidden taxation has been reduced by one copper in this budget. There is no hope of a reduction as long as the government continues in its present frame of mind.

What is the situation? There are taxes that are borne in this country by everyone, the whole twelve million of us. Is there any relief for them? Not a word in that regard. The budget still soaks everyone of them, and this government keeps on professing to be the government of the people. The Minister of National Defence this afternoon spoke about the government being the government of the people.

Mr. ABBOTT: I never used that phrase. I would think of something newer than that.

Mr. FLEMING: They are posing as the friend of the ordinary man, but this budget has exposed them. They are exposed out of their own mouths. This, I suppose, is a sample of the Liberal idea of a budget that meets the needs of the masses. But what about the masses? What about the tax on sugar—a cent a pound on a price of eight cents a pound still going on? It is still in full force