



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE ECONOMY: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

A speech by Mr. Donald M. Fleming, Minister of Finance, to the Canadian Club of Toronto, at the Royal York Hotel, on January 5, 1959.

It is a great pleasure to return to this Club of which I have been a member for so many years, and of which I had the honour for a time to be an officer.

I was very pleased when our President, last August, invited me to speak at the first meeting in this new year and to deliver a forecast of business and economic conditions for 1959. The timing of his invitation is a mark of the sagacity and foresight of the President. Perhaps if the invitation to attempt this forecast had been delivered more recently, my acceptance of it might not have been quite so readily forthcoming. Nevertheless, I do welcome this opportunity to review and assess the leading economic events and trends of 1958 and to estimate as best we can the strength and probable trend of these forces during the new year upon which we have now entered. The Roman god Janus, after whom this month is named, was always represented at the threshold of the temple with two faces, looking in opposite directions. It is appropriate that at this time of year we look back at the recent past and forward to the early future and guide our courses accordingly. The continuity of history is not changed simply by an alteration of a digit in the date.

Not a Budget Speech

I know I do not need to remind you that under our constitutional system a Minister of Finance must observe some very severe restrictions in the scope of any forecasting in which he indulges, except in his annual Budget presentation to the House of Commons. While he may and should at times comment upon the forces at work in the economy, it would be highly improper for him to relate such factors, in a public utterance, to future financial plans.