

**Senator Frith:** I sure would, and a lot of old age pensioners—

**Senator Roblin:** You wouldn't be able to.

**Senator Frith:**—would like to hear the answer, too.

**Senator Roblin:** The question of indexing is certainly under active public discussion. Indexing on the GIS continues. Partial indexing on old age security is to be altered when the budget measures come before Parliament, and they still have to be approved by Parliament. Unless one wants to carry my friend's interpretation of the rule of anticipation as far as that, one would not normally anticipate that it would be altered. However, that is the policy of the government at the present time, and it is to that policy that I must speak.

● (1420)

**Senator MacEachen:** Is the Leader of the Government in the Senate confirming that it is still the policy of the Government of Canada to eliminate full indexation of pension benefits, or, as he puts it, to institute a form of partial indexation for pension benefits? I think that the Leader of the Government adds to the confusion that we are all experiencing in knowing—

**Senator Flynn:** In exploiting.

**Senator Frith:** You would never do that, would you?

**Senator MacEachen:**—what the government really has in mind, because the Prime Minister himself is showing every indication of uncertainty and hesitation.

Yesterday, in the other place, in reply to a question, the Prime Minister said:

I can say without the slightest hesitation that, as far as this particular measure is concerned, we were somewhat hesitant, the proof being the statement in the Budget that we are going to monitor the situation on a regular basis.

The Prime Minister says he is hesitant—

**Senator Frith:** Without hesitation, he says it.

**Senator MacEachen:** The Prime Minister said:

I can say without the slightest hesitation that, as far as this particular measure is concerned, we were somewhat hesitant—

**Senator Flynn:** We were; we are not now; we were hesitant.

**Senator Frith:** That is what we are trying to find out. Senator Flynn says he is not hesitant now.

**Senator Flynn:** Now there is no problem.

**Senator MacEachen:** I would only await the word of the Leader of the Government in the Senate, rather than the word of Senator Flynn, that while there was hesitation before budget night, there is no hesitation today. Can the Leader of the Government say that that is the case?

**Senator Roblin:** When one enters into discussion about hesitation, when one enters into discussion about sober second thoughts; when one enters into discussion about changes in budgets, there is no person who is more expert in this field

[Senator Roblin.]

than my honourable colleague, Senator MacEachen. A few years ago, he brought in a budget for this country, and if there was one measure in that budget that was not changed, it escaped my notice. Possibly there were some, but I can say that over the following six to twelve months after that budget had been produced, every important, salient factor in it was subject to change.

**Senator Flynn:** And the minister also was changed.

**Senator Roblin:** I should modify that statement: I say "every"; it is always dangerous to make an absolute statement, because human beings are usually better off if they are not quite so positive. However, I would say that many of the proposals were changed, and for good and sufficient reason, and I do not think that my honourable friend regards himself as a disgrace because that happened. I do not think he felt that he had been abandoned or that he had betrayed his trust because he made some changes.

**Senator Flynn:** We were all in sympathy.

**Senator Roblin:** The fact that he had his whole budget thrown out—there I go again making these sweeping statements—but again, the fact that he had his whole budget thrown out perhaps did not please him but he did not regard himself as a failed public servant on that account. I suggest that when we discuss matters of budgetary alterations or budgetary reviews, we should realize that there is room in every budget—as, indeed, there was in his—to reconsider matters that have been put forward.

I would not like my honourable friend to stand up immediately and say, "What matters are you reconsidering?" because that is a question I am quite unable to answer at the present time. I can say, however, that in the budget papers themselves, in connection with this particular measure, it was made clear that there was concern and that it would be monitored. That is what the Prime Minister is saying in the other place, and I, for one, hope that that is the policy that we will follow. There may be improvements that can be made, and if there are such improvements, not only in this aspect of the budget but in others as well, as we debate them, I would not like to be one who says that I never change my mind or that nothing can ever be improved upon, because I think it can be. I tell my honourable friend that it is useless for him to try to sow—is it confusion? Well, I think so.

**Senator Flynn:** Exploit the confusion.

**Senator Frith:** Right on!

**Senator Roblin:** He has been doing that very successfully.

**Senator Flynn:** Exploiting the confusion in the mind of the public.

**Senator Roblin:** If there is confusion in the mind of the public, my honourable friend has some responsibility for that. I do not ascribe to him full responsibility for that, but he has to take some responsibility for it.

I am simply telling him that the Prime Minister's statement in the other place stands on its own feet; it speaks for itself. He