

to a very large item in that budget, namely, the energy policy, and the prices related to that policy.

**Senator Smith (Colchester):** If the honourable gentleman can confuse a few days with 50 days in office, then I must admit that he can do some fancy confusing work with figures. But all I asked him was how you go about reducing the deficit by increasing it.

**Senator Olson:** It seems to be fairly simple to me. The honourable gentleman, of course, wants to confuse things still further. Whatever was there on March 3 or 4, when this government took over, was there. We could not change that. And one of the things that has been pointed out over and over again was the massive increase from December 11 in two very important sectors, one being the debt service charges and the other being the oil import compensation payments. We had no control of that. Would you want us to refrain from acknowledging that that is part of the expenditure?

**Senator Smith (Colchester):** You would have been far more frank with the people if you had acknowledged that at the time you were asking them to believe something else.

**Hon. Orville H. Phillips:** Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question to that asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. In reply to that the honourable minister stated that he had no responsibility for economic policy. Will he explain to this chamber why he is as irresponsible as the Leader of the Government in the Senate?

**Senator Frith:** The question apparently is directed to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Senator Phillips:** It was based on his question. Could I please have an answer to my question? Why is the Minister of State for Economic Development—I am never sure of his function—but why is he as irresponsible as the Leader of the Government in the Senate?

**Senator Olson:** I don't think either one of us is irresponsible.

### THE CABINET

**Hon. G. I. Smith:** I wonder if the Minister of State for Economic Development could tell us whether there is a committee or some other organization within the cabinet called the Policy and Priorities Board or Policy and Priorities Committee?

**Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development):** I think I would take that question as notice. I am not sure. I have not checked out the rules at this stage, and it may be that there is more public information available. I say that very sincerely. But from the experience I had ten or 12 years ago when I was in the cabinet the last time, the composition of cabinet committees and indeed the assignment of work within them was not considered public information.

● (2130)

**Senator Smith (Colchester):** I have no objection whatever to the minister's taking it as notice, but I should like to ask him

also, if he is prepared to answer the question eventually, to indicate to us the members of that Board and what its duties are, so we know who is formulating the policy which may or may not have some influence upon the cabinet as a whole.

**Senator Olson:** I cannot give the honourable senator that kind of undertaking, because I have not the authority to do so. But the honourable senator can take it from me, even tonight, that the whole cabinet takes responsibility for all of the decisions that are made by all of the committees.

**Senator Smith (Colchester):** I am not talking about who takes responsibility. I am talking about who makes policy for which you poor fellows have to take the responsibility.

**Senator Olson:** The full cabinet takes the responsibility and, indeed, makes the policy.

**Senator Smith (Colchester):** So the honourable gentleman is, in any event, going to take the question as notice, serious notice, and give us an answer, or some reason why he cannot give an answer.

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government):** Of course, honourable senators are aware that the previous government on no occasion announced the makeup of various cabinet committees, unless the honourable senator is willing to share that list now *ex post facto* with the members of the Senate.

**Senator Smith (Colchester):** I don't know that it was ever asked to give the list. I am simply asking if there is such a body and, if so, what it does and who belongs to it. If the honourable gentlemen opposite, upon reflection, feel that they do not wish to disclose the names or existence of such a committee, that is up to them.

**Hon. Orville H. Phillips:** Honourable senators, perhaps I misinterpreted the question Senator Smith put, but for clarification I should like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate a question concerning the committees on which the three members of the cabinet serve, and concerning the responsibilities of those committees. I do not think that intrudes on cabinet secrecy.

For instance, it should be common knowledge what committees the Honourable Senator Perrault serves on, and, after seeing the television news in which he blasted the local Liberal executives, I am sure they, too, would like to know what committees he serves on. So would I. I would also like to know what cabinet committees the Minister of Economic Development serves on. I have a sneaking suspicion it is very few.

Then, of course, there is my honourable friend the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board, and in his case I may find, in answer to my question, that he serves on the fisheries board. I don't know.

In other words, I should like to know specifically what cabinet committees the three Senate members, who are deified within that specific cabinet circle, serve on.

**Senator Perrault:** The honourable senator is demonstrating an insatiable thirst for information this evening. I can only say that the information which he has requested is not available,