

—there's no question the region got the short end of the stick.

The Atlantic Provinces did get short-circuited in this budget, there's no two ways about it. A number of things will have a drastic impact on Atlantic Canada and this is why I say the federal government has to be educated to the fact that there is a need to address our special needs much differently than they have in this budget.

I ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether, as part of that process of education, the Council of Maritime Premiers has made a direct representation to the government for changes in this budget.

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government):** I respect the right of Premier Lee to represent the interests of his province in the best light possible. There is no question about that. That applies, of course, to any other province in this country.

Honourable senators, this general subject matter was dealt with yesterday, and I gave an answer. My friend, however, has asked a specific question: Has the Council of Maritime Premiers made any representation to the government? I will find out.

**Senator McElman:** I have a supplementary question, if I may. At the same time, Premier Lee—I assume that he was speaking as chairman of the Council of Maritime Premiers—said:

The premiers are also unhappy about Ottawa's decision to de-index old age security pensions—

I remind honourable senators that he is speaking on behalf of P.E.I., New Brunswick and Nova Scotia—on behalf of premiers who are not unfriendly, in normal circumstances, to the administration. With reference to de-indexation, Premier Lee went on to say that “the move is completely unacceptable.”

Would the Leader of the Government also inquire whether the Council of Maritime Premiers has made this view of de-indexation known to the Government of Canada?

**Senator Roblin:** I would just like to take issue with the premise of my honourable friend's question; namely, that if a party in power in a province is of the same political stripe as the party in power in Ottawa, there is some special electricity between them. Perhaps that is so, but I want to tell him that, as my honourable friend seated next to me says, it is high voltage electricity. Speaking as one in the business, I never found myself at any loss for inspiration or for words when I was a Progressive Conservative premier dealing with the Progressive Conservative government in Ottawa. In fact, I sometimes thought that other governments were just as easy to get along with.

**Senator Olson:** Perhaps you were better off with the Liberals.

**Senator Roblin:** At any rate, I will include the second part of my honourable friend's question in the inquiry that I make.

**Senator McElman:** In light of the comments of the Leader of the Government, perhaps I could assist him with respect to

the attitude of the Council of Maritime Premiers by quoting to him further from this same issue of the *Telegraph-Journal*:

Buchanan—

Of course, that is referring to Premier Buchanan.

—admitted before the premiers' meeting he would have raised cain had the former federal Liberal government tried to de-index old age pensions.

**Senator Roblin:** I am under the impression that he is raising cain with this one.

#### DE-INDEXATION OF PENSION BENEFITS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn:** Honourable senators, I have been simmering on the back bench—

**Senator Marshall:** The back burner.

**Senator Fairbairn:**—listening to Question Period this afternoon. I say to honourable senators that, unlike Senator Flynn, I am not bored—I am angered by the exchanges that have taken place in this chamber, in the other place and in the country over the past several days. We are talking about a segment of our society that is the most vulnerable of all segments and that suffers the most from daily insecurity and anxiety. I ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether he and his colleagues could go to their caucus this weekend and ask the Prime Minister if he could not withdraw his measure concerning de-indexation before Parliament adjourns at the end of this month.

**Senator Roblin:** I think my honourable friend knows that I am a member of the cabinet and that I am bound by cabinet solidarity.

**Senator Frith:** That was no answer. She asked whether the question could be raised with the Prime Minister.

**Senator Roblin:** What I do in the cabinet is something that I am not at liberty to discuss with my friend—

**Senator Frith:** It was caucus she asked about.

**Senator Roblin:**—and I am not going to.

**Senator Frith:** You are not going to raise it?

**Senator Roblin:** I am going to respect cabinet confidence and I am also going to respect caucus confidence. My honourable friend can fume over there all he likes, but he is not going to get a rise out of me.

**Senator Frith:** The things you take shelter in are unbelievable.

**Senator Roblin:** If you ever have a chance to do the job I am doing—which I think is quite unlikely—you may find it an interesting occupation.

**Senator Frith:** More interesting, I hope.

**Senator Roblin:** If you cannot do a better job than I am doing, you cannot be much good; that is all I can say.