

The Budget—Mr. Drew

Mr. Drew: The dominion-provincial conference of 1945-46 met on August 6, 1945. On that occasion there was a gratifying atmosphere of good will. If some hon. members, including the Minister of Justice, have been misled by this expensive propaganda let them go back and read the report of the proceedings on that occasion. They will find that the conference adjourned in August to meet again in November for the purpose of continuing the discussions. A statement was issued to the press by the then prime minister of Canada expressing great gratification with the results that had flowed from the conference up to that time. Then the conference met again on November 26, 1945, as a co-ordinating committee, and we discussed certain facts. We discussed the very obvious fact that the dominion government did not have the supporting information upon which to proceed with these proposals. In that regard I cannot help recalling something else that was said by the Prime Minister last Friday. As recorded at page 3287 of *Hansard* of last Friday the Prime Minister, referring to the communiqué issued following the conference of last week, said:

The communiqué indicates that there was a discussion of—I will not say "offer" or "proposal" of the federal government because those words were objected to by others attending on the ground that there was nothing complete that could be regarded as an "offer" or as a "proposal"—a suggestion that I put before the meeting on the first day when it was an open public meeting.

May I emphasize these words, Mr. Speaker, because they have such a reminiscent sound in relation to that earlier conference. These are the words of the Prime Minister of last Friday:

It was quite evident, and no one questioned it, that we did not have accurate information that would permit of the establishment of an exact formula.

We have been pressing in this house for more than two years for an examination of the whole problem, for consultation with the provinces, for the taking of steps to deal with unemployment, and yet only last week we were told by the Prime Minister that they do not have the facts. It was not because they did not have plenty of help to get the facts for them. Not only the dominion bureau of statistics but every department has some form of research branch of its own, some more elaborate than others, and these research branches were available to them. But I should like hon. members to recall, and with deference may I say particularly hon. members opposite, that during all these discussions when we have urged action the Prime Minister remained silent in this house in regard to unemployment. The government gave no indication to us it was going to do

anything about it. Then, on the very eve of this new dominion-provincial conference, proposals were given to the press with the usual fanfare to indicate that this beneficent government was going to do great things for unemployment. Now we find from the statement of the Prime Minister that those assurances were given without any supporting information. Mr. Speaker, that is reckless and irresponsible.

They withdrew from the proposals put forward in 1945. They put other proposals forward and they did not have the facts. It was just something to catch the eye of the people of Canada through the press and over the radio as this conference met. They did not have anything to put before that conference last week—not a thing. As the Prime Minister has told us, those who were there even objected to these being called proposals, and I should think very wisely in view of what we have now heard. But, Mr. Speaker, these proposals, and they were proposals, were put forward as a basis for discussion. I can only hope that on this occasion the government really intends to try to make this conference reach some positive conclusion. What I have just said has a direct bearing on what occurred in 1945 and in 1946.

In the autumn of 1945, it became quite clear that the government, this same government, did not have the facts. An economic committee, therefore, was set up to examine the facts. The committee was made up of government experts from every one of the governments, including the dominion government. Then, following that we all met again on January 28, 1946. Again, this was a meeting of the co-ordinating committee but it brought together the Prime Minister of Canada, the premiers of the provinces, a number of their ministers and the staff that was needed for that purpose.

Then, on a later occasion we had a plenary conference which met on April 29, 1946. I had no intention of going into this detail about this conference but when the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson), who was there, says that these proposals were refused he is either very forgetful or very careless of his statements. The fact remains that we were discussing these matters right up to the adjournment on May 3, 1946, on the basis that we were going to meet again to consider all the proposals. Let me read from the last page of the *Hansard* record of this conference, page 624. I am going to start quoting from the statement of Mr. Ilsley, who was then minister of finance. After his opening remarks he had this to say, and I shall continue to read to the end of the *Hansard* record which is on the same page. I am quoting now from Mr. Ilsley, and I ask