

The Address—Hon. M. Lambert

The Chairman of the Economic Council of Canada and other members of the Council stated the year before last that the government's fiscal and monetary policies ought to be very carefully assessed and watched because it is very easy to overstep the mark. We must remember that these fiscal and monetary policies of taxation and tight money have very deep effects. All too often the federal government is unable to stop the downward trend. Adequate measures should be taken soon. Somewhere along the line the government economists and the advisers to the minister have missed the boat. They have not seen the warning lights.

The Minister of Finance talked about relaxation of fiscal and monetary policies, but it has been proved that he is too late. When the Economic Council of Canada gave a very mild warning they were bitterly condemned by the minister and his advisers for doing so. However, they were correct. The minister has said that the government has now taken certain steps. The government is going to pump some extra millions of dollars into the hands of the provinces.

The government is making available \$150 million for housing and \$60 million, which is peanuts, for advancing maintenance and repairs. What are they going to do? Are they going to paint garages of DND establishments? Are they going to renew doors and partitions of government buildings? Are they going to overhaul and instal more luxurious furniture in ministerial offices and the offices of senior civil servants? What are they going to do with \$25 million? There will be \$15 million for certain work projects. I repeat, \$15 million. This is like giving a man who is dying of thirst a drop of water. A much more massive injection must be furnished by the government.

I am conscious of the time I have left, Mr. Speaker. At page 106 of *Hansard* there is a table which is headed, "Federal government expenditure public accounts and national accounts reconciliation". It is the same table that appears at page 4749 of *Hansard* for the last session. This is included in the minister's budget speech of March 12.

Remarkably the 1969-70 preliminary figures in the left-hand column of the table shown on page 106 are somewhat different from those that appear at page 4749 of last session's *Hansard*. I do not know how preliminary figures can change, if they are preliminary figures. There is also a major change with respect to the 1970-71 forecast. The total expenditure on a national accounts basis proposed for 1970-71 is \$16,150 million while the total of budgetary expenses is \$13,250 million. This is again a big increase, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): I am sorry to inform the hon. member that his time is over.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Could the House grant me a few additional minutes, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Does the House agree to the member for Edmonton West continuing his speech?

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

Some hon. Members: Agreed!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. members of the House. I have only a short bit to add.

In years past, we have been told by successive ministers of finance that what must really be considered are the surplus or deficit figures on a national accounts basis. Those were the true ones. I remember when the Hon. Walter Gordon instituted this basis. This was to be the real basis of comparisons. The budgetary basis was considered to be nothing, but strangely enough if the national accounts basis is to be considered on the revised figures as they appeared in the minister's speech on Tuesday, we have gone from a budgetary surplus of \$250 million in March through the successive changes announced at the dominion-provincial conference to a deficit position of \$450 million on a national accounts basis. In his speech the minister said that instead of having a budgetary surplus, we will have a budgetary deficit of \$150 million on the basis of our present estimates.

I am often reminded of the time in February of 1968 when the present Minister of Finance stood opposite and said, "I guarantee we will balance the budget". In October figures were tabled showing that the budget was \$825 million in the red. I have as much faith in the minister's figures now as I did at that time.

Mr. Woolliams: I rise on a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. During this important debate on the economic condition of the country no minister of the government has seen fit to attend on this debate this afternoon, even though a point of order was raised by another member in the House of Commons. In view of that fact, I wish to move the following motion:

● (3:30 p.m.)

That this House adjourn and report progress until a member of the government sees fit to attend this most important debate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): I wish to bring to the attention of the hon. member the fact that, according to the advice I have received, since he rose on a point of order, it is not possible for him to make such a motion.

Mr. Woolliams: What I did, in fact, Mr. Speaker, was to raise a question of privilege. A question of privilege can be raised at this time because this is a matter which affects the proceedings which are taking place in the House at this moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): In my opinion the hon. member's motion should be related to the question of privilege. The point which the hon. member raised just now was made previously by another hon. member.