

Finance (Mr. Dunning) seems to face it with so much energy that we may soon hail a balanced budget.

Then, the statement made by the hon. the Minister of Finance on the first of January last was most gratifying. May I quote an excerpt from his survey of the economic conditions:

In my budget address last February, I expressed the belief that we could keep the overall deficit down to \$35,000,000 for 1937-1938 and that we could attain our goal of a balanced budget in the following year. I am still confident that these expressed objectives will prove to be conservative. Had it not been for the western drought, we should have had a balanced budget this year.

He goes on to say:

I think I may say that the year 1937 has seen considerable progress made, not only in the restoration of our normal economic conditions but also in the strengthening of our national finances. We still have problems to solve, but the progress already made leaves no basis for discouragement.

That is a statement deserving to be brought to the attention of the electors of the constituency which I have the honour to represent here.

During that campaign, my fellow members of this house and I discussed all those problems, and at a mass meeting held at Saint-Flavien on the 19th of December last, my constituents even had the honour of welcoming the right hon. the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) who was accompanied by the hon. the Minister of National Health (Mr. Power), and on that occasion, the right hon. the Minister of Justice delivered a speech which the people of the constituency of Lotbinière, nay, which all the provinces and even the whole country had been awaiting. Mr. Speaker, the right hon. the Minister of Justice did not disappoint his audience. Speaking for over an hour, he placed before the province and the country the true problem on which the electors were called upon to vote on the 27th of December, and in a straightforward manner, he recalled what the government had done, emphasizing at the same time the main issues which, in such a campaign had to be considered and decided upon.

I need not add that, on such occasion, he was given a tribute not only of admiration but also of trust, because, speaking as a leader of the province of Quebec, as a statesman, he was able to place the problems in their true light without paying any attention to those appeals to passion and prejudice with which, ever since the beginning of the campaign, our opponents had endeavoured to sway public opinion.

[Mr. Francoeur.]

But I must admit that they did not care to say anything about the government's record from 1935 to the present time. Two main issues were discussed. At first, they brought up the question of secession, thus reviving a subject which dated back several years; they said that the province of Quebec, in order to enjoy her autonomy, her privileges and her rights, had to withdraw from confederation. The other important issue was the national defence question.

Incidentally, I should point out that the government's opponent was not a Conservative, since the Conservative party had not seen fit to put in a candidate. A nationalist-independent candidate entered the lists. We did not hesitate, my friends and I, to discuss that issue of secession, we stated that the province of Quebec—and in this we knew that our feelings were those of the majority of electors—did not wish to withdraw from confederation, but wanted to remain in it as long as not only the letter but also the very spirit of confederation was adhered to.

Seeing that such an argument had not much effect upon the electors, our opponents stated that they would leave aside for the time being, the secession issue, that they would abstain from any agitation over that matter in order to examine and dwell upon the reasons why the province of Quebec should have greater autonomy.

Mr. Speaker, that school appealed to very few serious-minded men in the province of Quebec, but enlisted the support of a few young people eager to get on, of a few young men thwarted in their ambition, and I may add, of the dregs of nearly every party who believe they can seize the avenues of power by reviving that issue of the withdrawal of the province of Quebec from confederation.

But I may state in this house, to the representatives of other provinces of the dominion, that the province of Quebec means to continue as a member of the confederation, as long, I repeat, as the British North America Act is adhered to, and provided Quebec is treated like the other provinces of the dominion. Moreover, I had the opportunity to recall, even during the last campaign, the attitude I had taken on that issue, long before the last appeal to the electorate.

In 1909, when I had the honour of being requested by Sir Lomer Gouin, then premier of the province of Quebec, to move the address in reply to the speech from the throne in the Quebec legislature, the problem had already arisen, as a result of a nationalistic campaign. May I quote here the answer I made to those who sought directly or indirectly