

*The Budget—Mr. Simmons*

**Mr. Simmons:** I know him, and I knew him even before he sat in my living room 11 years ago and invited me to join his team in his quest for leadership of his party, which at that time was Liberal. He did not win that quest, and that explains why he crossed the floor to the Tories. That, of course, does not explain why he crossed the floor to the Liberals and left his Tory grandfather in the first place.

The Minister of Finance took pains to tell us about his successive electoral victories. I want to talk to you about just two of them to make a point in relation to the budget. One election took place about two months after he had joined the Tory administration in Newfoundland and about three weeks after he had delivered his first budget in which he literally dwarfed Churchill's sweat, blood and tears speech of World War II. In that election the Minister of Finance got 74 per cent of the votes cast.

After having been three years as minister of finance he faced another election, after he had not quite delivered the Utopia he had promised. In that election he got a majority of 437, or 54 per cent of the votes. Not surprisingly, within a year he was running federally. It was a choice really of running or being run out of town. That is a demonstration of that bit of wisdom which says that if you are about to be run out of town get at the front of the crowd so it looks like they are having a parade in your honour!

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Simmons:** I promised I would tell you a few things about the Minister of Finance. He was the deputy mayor of St. John's. He was second to the mayor. He was the second man in Joe Smallwood's Liberal cabinet. He was the second man in Frank Moore's PC cabinet. He is now the second man in the Prime Minister's cabinet. Not that the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) is the first man. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) is the first man. The Minister of Finance is doing today in this budget what he has done all his life. He is playing second fiddle. In this case the first fiddle is the President of the Treasury Board. I love poetry. "The Origin of The Term Second Fiddle" is a little piece I have. It is anonymous, but I have this little couplet here which states:

I am the dean, and this is Mrs. Liddell.  
She is the first and I the second fiddle.

The dean is the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board is like Mrs. Liddell. The Minister of Finance is always the bridesmaid and never the bride, until one day the bridesmaid dreamed about being the bride, and then dreamed she was a bride, and then believed her dream!

Who wrote the budget speech? I do not mean who physically transcribed it, but who dictated the budget? Was it dictated by some of the ministers who do not sit here because they could not win themselves a seat? Was it the minister of small businesses, the minister of international trade and economic development, and the minister of industry, trade and commerce and whatever else? I will tell you how many portfolios he has. If you count all the junior ministers on that side who answer to him, you have fully half the Tory bench. Did he

write the budget? If so, I cannot see the Minister of Finance reading it because those two guys, as I hear it, are not on very good terms these days. Did the President of the Treasury Board write the budget? Then again, how could the Minister of Finance read it because he and the minister responsible for the Treasury Board are not on particularly good terms these days either.

● (2120)

Or was it another minister who dictated this budget? Was it the senior minister from Alberta? No, I do not mean the Prime Minister, I mean the senior minister from Alberta, Mr. Loughheed. Who dictated this budget? That is the first question to which I would like to have an answer.

The Minister of Finance has stated his complete strategy on reducing the deficit. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, as one who knows, that he is not without experience in this matter, or at least in a related matter. When he was with the Tory opposition in Newfoundland in 1970 he said, as it is reported in the extract of *Hansard* which I have here, as an opposition member talking about the scandalously high Newfoundland debt on that day which approached something in the order of \$600 million or \$700 million—he said, in part, and with humour, which is so much a part of him:

I have heard the premier saying—

He is talking about Premier Smallwood.

—I have heard him say, 'we will just roll over this money. This is no problem, we will roll it over'. The theme song of the government seems to be 'roll me over' with respect to the funded debt of this province.

Then he goes on to lament the size of the public debt of approximately \$700 million. In truth, by the time this minister became the provincial minister of finance, those shockingly bad Liberals had put it up from about \$700 million to fully \$900 million. So his great crusade was to bring down this shockingly high public debt. Keep in mind that when he assumed the portfolio of finance, the debt was \$900 million. When this provincial minister of finance left that portfolio two years later, it was \$2 billion! This is the same man who, after great success in reducing the public debt in Newfoundland all the way down from \$900 million to \$2 billion—that is a long way down—and after solving our problems down there, has come up here to solve some of your problems, Mr. Speaker. He intends to reduce your deficit for you now, sir!

As one of my friends to my left said earlier this week, the government is having a bit of an experimental program in math, and do not be surprised if reduction means multiplying by two or 2.5 over the next three or four years, that is, if they have the chance to be the government that long, but that is not something we will have to deal with now. Clearly, the Minister of Finance has the experience, and I leave it to hon. members to decide whether it will be helpful in his present crusade to reduce the deficit. I have warned you, Mr. Speaker, not to hold your breath.

There is no doubt that this man has humour. He had it in the quote which I gave, and he has it now. Indeed, I would guess that of all those in this chamber tonight, I, more than