

The Budget—Mr. Martin

shown increasingly if not his old-time form of exactitude, his old-time form of vigour.

Sir, I rise primarily today to answer the observation made by the Leader of the Opposition in the early part of his speech, when he took issue with the implication of my question that the 1945 proposals of the federal government have in the field of health and welfare been implemented to the extent of over two-thirds. The Leader of the Opposition contradicted that statement and said it was not true. I now propose among other things to deal with that particular aspect of the question and show that my statement is fully substantiated by the evidence I am now going to offer.

It will be understood and remembered that the 1945 proposals were a series of integrated proposals the implementation of which depended upon the finding of agreement with the provinces on fiscal measures. It was clear at all times that the several and individual proposals could not stand by themselves. The federal government offered to bring in certain measures in consideration of particular agreements, mainly in fiscal matters, with the provincial governments. My hon. friend has said it was this government that scuttled the conference of 1945. I do not know whether he meant or hoped to indicate by that statement a suggestion that we had done the same last week or were proposing to do so next fall. But I want to say—

Mr. Drew: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, may I say that in my remarks there was no suggestion, so far as last week's preliminary meeting was concerned, of any such thought or any such indication. The fact is that so little was done that it would not have been possible anyway.

Mr. Martin: I thank my hon. friend for saying that his reference was to the 1945 conference and not to the conference of last week. As one of those who participated in last week's conference, one of the sessions of which—and I think it was the most important one—was a secret session by agreement, I may say that there was a disposition on the part of everyone, from the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. St. Laurent) down to every premier and delegate, to deal in a spirit of understanding and co-operation and by means of constructive effort, with the difficult problems that face Canada. I am sure that spirit will prevail under the Prime Minister of Canada, who we all know is capable of nothing but understanding and co-operative effort.

The premier of Ontario—and he disagrees with the Leader of the Opposition—in commenting on the conference of last week said it was a most helpful one on the part of all

parties to the conference. I believe the way to bring about good government in Canada is by so conducting oneself as to make it possible for all those taking part in a dominion-provincial conference to say that what we have done has been done in a co-operative and understanding spirit.

I shall not say to the Leader of the Opposition that he did not approach the problems in 1945 as sincerely as did anyone else. The hon. gentleman is a sincere-minded gentleman. While we may differ on issues, I shall never be found accusing him of want of sincerity. However, I say to him in all earnestness, that my reading of the record of the 1945 conference suggests that, notwithstanding the fact that the hon. gentleman may have been acting, as possibly he thought he was, in the interests of his province—and for that I give him credit—his attitude was one of the main factors why that conference did not succeed.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that in 1945 no agreement was reached on fiscal affairs. So the federal government has never at any time since that date been committed or obligated to carry out the 1945 proposals, since the conditions on which they were based have never been fulfilled. Despite this fact, the federal government has actually gone ahead on a unilateral basis with such portions of the 1945 program as it seemed possible from time to time to implement. The result is that 10 years later, in 1955, we find that most of the proposals have, in fact, been implemented to a degree far in excess of the levels suggested at the 1945 conference.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, might I ask what the minister is reading from, in order that I may know the source of the information he is giving to us?

Mr. Martin: My hon. friend is asking a perfectly correct question. When he was reading some of his notes I wondered the same thing.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I take it that the hon. member for Eglinton is rising on a question of privilege.

Mr. Fleming: I am rising on a question of privilege. The minister has said that the Leader of the Opposition was reading from his notes. That, if true, would have been a breach of the rules of the house. The Leader of the Opposition was not reading from his notes.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Eglinton rises on a question of privilege to state that the Leader of the Opposition has been improperly accused of reading from his