

*The Budget—Mr. Drew*

is pictured in all his glory, and in the propaganda that goes out there is no suggestion that the face is even a false face that Santa Claus wears. But this is more than just simply an aside. I hope I shall not be accused of attacking Santa Claus in making these remarks, in view of some of the difficulties that have been encountered by the Department of National Health and Welfare in that respect on other occasions. But may I say that this matter is of more than passing interest because right down the line there has been an attempt to confuse the record with regard to what has taken place with regard to the whole problem of dominion-provincial relations and the constitution under which this government must conduct its affairs if they are to be conducted at all.

Before I proceed to deal with this matter, may I say that there was, of course, the reverse side of the coin in the statement made by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent). That is why I say this was a most confusing statement. As recorded on the next page of *Hansard*, page 3288, I asked this question:

Mr. Drew: I should like to ask a supplementary question on the same subject matter as that to which we have been referring, and which follows as a result of the question that followed mine. In view of the fact that we have been from time to time referring to these proposals from both sides of the house, I should like to ask the Prime Minister to whom we can look for a correct interpretation of what is described as the green book if we cannot look to him for that interpretation.

Mr. St. Laurent: I think the best place to look is in the green book itself—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. St. Laurent:—in which can be found exactly how those proposals were put forth.

Mr. Drew: Then do I take it that the Prime Minister has withdrawn his earlier statement, and that the green book still stands as the proposals that he could accept?

Mr. St. Laurent: If there were manifested to us a disposition of all the provincial governments to accept—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Drew: That is the other side. I hear "hear, hear" from those who applaud every statement that emanates from the Liberal side of the house. But, nevertheless, which of these statements are we to accept?

Mr. Rowe: They are exactly opposite.

Mr. Drew: Which of them stands as the position of this government today?

An hon. Member: Take your choice, George.

Mr. Drew: I was very much interested in that interpolation, "Take your choice, George", interjected by one of the Liberal members. That is exactly where we are left. Whether it is Tom, Dick, Harry or George, we are all left in the same position. Every hon. member on the other side of the house—

Mr. Brown (Essex West): Do not forget us.

Mr. Drew: Oh, no. I would not forget those to my immediate right.

An hon. Member: The rump.

Mr. Drew: Oh, I think we shall describe them as the Liberals to the right. They are to be distinguished from the Liberals to the left. I would not forget them because the remark, "Take your choice, George", did, in fact, come from one of the Liberals to the right. That is exactly the attitude of this government to parliament: Put any statement before the house; never mind whether it is consistent or inconsistent; never mind whether supporting facts have been made available. Then if you try to find out what the facts are, laughingly you are told, with great applause for the wisdom of the statement, "Take your choice".

That is exactly where we have been left in this session and for several preceding sessions. But this is something which calls for a little bit more orderly approach. I should think that there is no subject about which we have more right to know what the facts are than the constitution itself under which we sit here in this House of Commons. We surely cannot have it suggested for a moment that this is a matter of concern only to the Canadian government and the governments of the provinces. This is a matter of concern to every member of parliament. In the face of these statements, every member of parliament is entitled to have an answer to the question: Where do we stand on this subject at this time? When the dominion-provincial conference meets in October, this meeting is not a choice, exclusive club open only to members of this government and the governments of the 10 provinces. The government of Canada will simply be there as the executive of this parliament. The members of this parliament have a right to know what the position is, and we have a duty to say what we think about a situation of this kind where the clearest remark that has yet been made from the other side is, "Take your choice, George".

That is not good enough. By all manner of means, as between any different set of facts that may be legitimately open to question, each one of us may be called upon from time to time to take our choice. But we surely have a right to know exactly what the position is in regard to these proposals to which the Liberal party has committed itself so irrevocably. Surely they are not going to say now that this is something that can be abandoned so lightly because it is not only the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) who has dealt with this matter. After the 1945-46 conference had been disposed