

*The Budget—Hon. Marcel Lambert*

• (4:50 p.m.)

Then he said:

I am happy to honour that commitment tonight and to provide the house at the same time with information as to the steps which the government is taking to effect a substantial reduction in the rate of growth of the public service of Canada.

At page 5178, in the same speech, the Minister of Finance said:

There have been many demands from the opposition side of the house and from other quarters during recent weeks and months that the government reveal full details as to what cuts it is making and how it intends to achieve the containment of its over-all budgetary expenditures within this \$10.3 billion ceiling.

On the same page the minister said:

The present indications are that main estimates as printed and presented will run somewhat in excess of \$10 billion but less than the \$10.3 billion mentioned by the Minister of Finance. Later, there will, of course, be unavoidable supplementary estimates to reckon with, throughout the course of fiscal year 1968-69.

The minister has just told me that his budgetary forecast for the balance of the fiscal year will not be subject to supplementary estimates, but back in December he said the figures he had given us would be subject to supplementary estimates. We know that. This is the normal practice; so why try to tell us that the figures the minister has given take into account supplementary estimates? They cannot. The minister cannot tell us what the supplementary estimates will be. Then he said:

These may well run the gross total of estimates, together with statutory appropriations, as high as \$10.5 billion;—

He was a little short still, because his main expenditures are running higher than that. Then he said:

—but, as past experience shows, not less than 2 per cent of this authority will be destined to lapse unspent because of circumstances beyond the control of the departments concerned. The deduction of this lapse of 2 per cent or \$200 million will bring the actual budgetary expenditure, we expect, for 1968-69 within the projected target figure, announced by the Minister of Finance, of \$10.3 billion.

I shall have something to say about these percentage figures in respect of forecasts of expenditures and revenue and just how far the minister himself said he missed the target. Here is the real climax, Mr. Speaker. As reported at page 6663 of *Hansard*, on February 13 last the Minister of Finance, in answer to a question asked by the former hon. member for Ontario, Mr. Starr, had this to say:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to guarantee to the house that after the supplementary estimates are [Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

introduced during the year and the year has ended, with the normal lapses that always occur, we will hit our \$10.3 billion ceiling and will balance the budget this year.

The man who was speaking is the Minister of Finance. This is why I say that the credibility of this whole budgetary exercise has been placed in jeopardy—indeed, not only in jeopardy but it has been completely thrown out.

**Mr. Woolliams:** There is no credibility; that is the answer.

**Mr. Harkness:** Guarantees are not worth anything.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** I hope to read later from an interview the minister had on a well known television program. I understand that the word "guarantee" will be found blazoned across the minister's chest when he dies. That word has now been seared into his chest. Coming back to the points I made on budget night, Mr. Speaker, the government had to recognize certain problems that the country is facing. As I said, the purpose of a budget is to analyse the fiscal problems of the country, government programs, and to provide the means whereby we can deal with those problems.

What problems do we have? I will go through them very briefly. First of all there is the problem of sorting out priorities as between Canada's needs for health, education and social services. This has not been done, although now as a belated exercise the Minister of Finance has larded his speech with remarks about planning, priorities, and so forth. This is not the first time the government has done this because the last budget speech had something to say about priorities.

**Mr. Stanfield:** It is an annual speech.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** As a matter of fact, when we suggested that something concrete could have been done about this situation we were pooh-poohed. I am sure my leader will have something to say about this matter when he participates in the debate.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Yes, sir!

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** In addition, when it comes to planning these priorities it is obvious that the government has not a penny left for the construction of additional hospitals or for the training of additional doctors and nurses. Yet it not only insists upon but uses a blackjack to force the provinces into its own plan of medicare not that of the