

laws." That seems to be the prescription upon which the government is now acting: "Sign on the dotted line and you will get so much. If you do not, you will have to suffer the consequences." That is the financial power the federal government has over the provinces—and it is a tremendous thing.

While I am talking along those lines might I point out that the same Minister of Finance in the same administration, an administration which is able to supply billions of dollars in foreign credits, is not able to supply a paltry hand-out to our own provinces who, after all, are our own people. That, to me, is a strange thing.

Not only do we pour out billions of dollars in export credits, but the government brings in a bill known as the Export Credits Insurance Act. What is it for? It is to guarantee the chartered banks or the purveyors of credit against loss. I believe our foreign credits amount to something in the neighbourhood of \$3 billion—and if my figure is not correct the minister will correct me. What does this mean? It means an export of three billion Canadian dollars; that is what it means; it does not mean anything else. We bring in a bill assuring the purveyors of credit, those who wield the fountain pens, that they will be protected if those dollars do not come back.

Here is another thing. We are doing that in a most uncertain world; we are doing that in a world of nations whose collateral is questionable. Yet when we come to deal with the provinces which administer health services, educational services and old age pensions, what is the answer? The minister says, "Go back; mind your own business; we are sorry; we cannot give you anything; we can export our dollars to foreign countries; but we cannot give our own people, and especially our aged people, the dollar security that they should have." That is a blight on our Canadian civilization, and that alone should be enough to condemn any powerful federal government.

There is another thing I should like to say right along that line. What stands behind these export credits if the dollars do not return to us? What collateral is behind that? We have our Export Credits Insurance Act to cover insurance against loss, but who is to pay the loss; what stands behind that? It is nothing but the ability of the people of Canada to pay taxes. So we export our dollars and we say to our people, if our dollars do not come back you will have to cough up by way of taxation. That is what happens. Yet when our people in the provinces want a few paltry dollars to raise old age pensions and help the indigent, we have not enough money for them.

[Mr. Hansell.]

Surely our own collateral is good. Surely it should be good if our dollars remain within our country. You have a chance to get them back if they are in our own country; but, "oh, we cannot do that, gentlemen."

Who told the Minister of Finance that he could not do it? Is he refusing to do it on his own responsibility? Is he saying, "I cannot do it." We want to know why he cannot and we are looking for the answer.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr. Golding):
The hon. member has exhausted his time.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Go ahead.

Mr. HANSELL: I was going on to another subject, but I shall do so at another time.

Mr. JOHN T. HACKETT (Stanstead):
Mr. Speaker, I am sadly in need of the lessons, both in finance and in poker, that the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Hansell) has given to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilesley) and other members of the house this afternoon. I do not know how much the minister is in need of the lessons in poker, but I am in need of them and I am grateful to the previous speaker for them. As to the lessons in finance, possibly the minister and I can both give them what is called in parliamentary language, due consideration.

The Minister of Finance is a notable figure in any House of Commons, possibly the most important after the Prime Minister. Most of what he does is in fact less subject to scrutiny than what is done by his colleagues. Finance is not something apart from policy, in reality it is an expression of policy. The Minister of Finance has told the house, that many hundreds of millions of dollars are required to carry out the government's policies during the fiscal year 1946-1947. He alone is not responsible for the amount. In criticizing a budget one is not criticizing the Minister of Finance alone, he is criticizing the policy which has made necessary the raising of such sums of money. Sometimes it happens that one does not criticize the amount itself but is critical of the way in which it is intended to be raised.

It is difficult in the second week of a debate of this kind, a debate which has followed so closely in the wake of public consideration of many questions which were discussed by the minister in the dominion-provincial conference, to say very much that has not already been said. The minister has pointed out that he has prepared his budget on the assumption that no general agreement with the provinces could be had, and he said that his task has been made extremely difficult by the fact that no general agreement was reached with the provinces. He has told