

*Dominion-Provincial Relations*

**Mr. Pickersgill:** That is why, in spite of the high-handed, unilateral, dictatorial method used by this government, we are going to vote for this measure.

The minister has not learned much, but he does seem to have learned one thing—he has learned a bit, perhaps, today—and that is that this is an exceedingly complicated subject, and that amateurs are very wise if they get professional advice before making statements in this house. I ask every hon. member who was in the last parliament if he can imagine Mr. Harris coming into this house with a little piece of paper prepared in some hole in the corner, reading it, and then coming back two days later to apologize in a surly fashion for his mistakes. One of my hon. friends says he did not even apologize, so I will withdraw that. And can anyone imagine Mr. Abbott doing that, or Mr. Ilsley, or Mr. Ralston, or Mr. Dunning—

**An hon. Member:** Or Mr. Bennett.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Yes, or Mr. Bennett. Can anyone imagine Mr. Bennett sitting up in his room in the Chateau Laurier doing his own arithmetic and bringing in his own little bit of paper and then having to apologize. Mr. Chairman—

**The Acting Chairman (Mr. Rea):** Order. The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate has the floor, and unless there is silence we cannot hear what he has to say.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance brought in supplementary estimates today. I am relying on my memory with regard to them; I have not got the Department of Finance to give me the figures, though if I had I would use its services. The expenditures which were going to be reduced by half a billion dollars this year by this government are now \$5,780 million for the current fiscal year—far higher than these extravagant expenditures which were denounced during the election campaign. The Minister of Finance, the great authority on the rights of parliament and on the right of every hon. member to the fullest possible examination of all the public accounts, has the trust of managing this huge sum of money—far and away the biggest financial trust in this country, and, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has just said, what confidence can the people of Canada have in a minister who has put on the kind of performance we saw on Saturday and again yesterday and again today.

**An hon. Member:** He has your confidence.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Here is the explanation for his mistake that the minister gave yesterday as recorded on page 3874 of *Hansard*:

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

The other eight provinces receive benefit from the fact that British Columbia and Prince Edward Island do not now take their full share by reason of the prior application of the stabilization principle.

What rubbish. There is not a word of truth in it; not a tittle of truth. That is the explanation which is made. When the minister makes an egregious error he comes in and makes a statement which shows he does not understand the first thing about the matter he is bringing before the house. Then he comes to us tonight and says: I was betrayed into developing this interesting theory because, by sheer coincidence, the set of figures I gave the house erroneously on Saturday happened to add up to within \$3,000 of a set of figures prepared by the department—the best estimate that the most competent people can give. It is a sorry picture of the financial management of this country which we have had in the last two days—

**An hon. Member:** You are voting for a sorry picture.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** It pains me to do it, but I think it is my duty as a responsible member of the opposition to bring this point to the attention of the public of this country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are one or two questions which came to my mind as I was listening to the explanations, or to what passed for explanations, which were given earlier by the Minister of Finance. The one thing I have not been able to understand—and I am not going to weary the committee by getting out the Prime Minister's many promises about how this conference was going to be called immediately after the election—is this announcement about not calling this conference earlier. There was no reason why this conference should not have been called in July when the Prime Minister was at the Calgary stampede. Probably he thought he could get more votes at the stampede. It is nonsense to talk about not calling this conference. There is no reason why it could not have been held in July and the whole thing could then have been disposed of before the session began and the benefits made available for the current fiscal year. And if they had been available for the current fiscal year, the provincial budgets about which the Minister of Finance is so solicitous—though he was not so solicitous about bringing in a budget of his own—could have been prepared on a sound basis. If that course had been taken, and the amendment brought in in October, the benefits could have been available for the fiscal year 1957-58; the provinces would have had this money now, and they could have been proceeding with a lot of useful work which would have reduced the regrettable unemployment which we now