

Mr. CASGRAIN: The poorest speech in his career.

Mr. ILSLEY: Before I deal with the few features of the budget which I think deserve some comment, I should like to say that we seem to be getting into the habit of regarding budgets not as financial statements of the government's intentions but as preliminary drafts only. In 1931 when the Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) was Minister of Finance he introduced a budget which later on was very materially altered. The same was true of the budget of 1932 and it will no doubt be true of the budget of 1933. I have no objection to changes being made—the changes which have been made in the past have been good ones—but I do think it unfortunate that ministers of finance should get into the habit of simply getting up something and bringing it into the house by way of a preliminary draft and then having us go through the discussion in committee of ways and means with the idea of getting something out at the end of the session which may perhaps meet the requirements of the case. Such action misleads the business interests of the country because one does not know until the discussion has ended just what the budget actually will be.

I think this is all a vindication of the position taken by the opposition during the past two years that we in this House of Commons or in this parliament should not delegate legislative functions to the governor in council. Large powers are now vested in the governor in council under the various relief acts. These powers are such that the governor in council can deal with intricate and difficult matters, and if the manner in which the government will deal with them in council is exemplified by the manner in which they prepare their budgets, this House of Commons could certainly do a better job with the legislation of the country than could the governor in council.

There are a few and only a few provisions of the budget with which I wish to deal. The first is that relating to ex-service men. I want to read the part of the budget that deals with pensions. On page 3223 of Hansard of March 21, 1933, the Minister of Finance is reported as follows:

In this connection, I may say that with respect to pensioners who are in the employ of the government and who are paid the salary of the position, action will be taken whereby the payment of pension will be suspended during the period of such employment. Where the full salary of the position is not paid, the pension payment may not exceed the amount

of the difference between salary received and the established salary of the position. If the pension is greater than the salary, the employee shall elect either to be paid the pension and relinquish the position, or to retain the position and have the pension withheld during the period of such employment. This will be made applicable not only to the government service but also to boards or commissions whose activities are financed from the Dominion treasury.

The Minister of Finance, in a statement which he made last Friday, indicated that another statement might be made in regard to the government's intentions with respect to pensions, and from the newspapers I gather the impression that those intentions may be substantially modified. But we do not know that; no such statement has yet been made. Therefore I feel I would be derelict in my duty if I did not take the statement literally as set forth in the budget and submit to the house a few of the consequences that will follow if it is applied as it now stands.

There is, in the towns and villages of this country, a large class of disabled men, in receipt of disability pensions, who, encouraged by a provision that has been in the Civil Service Act since 1918 to apply for public positions, have done so and are now in charge of post offices and the like, in positions which give them a small return. A very common class in the villages and towns in the country is that of which the type is a pensioner who has lost an arm or a leg or has some other disability; he is getting a small pension and a salary of a few hundred dollars, and by uniting the pension and the salary he is able to support his wife and family. If the passage that I have read from the budget speech means what it appears to mean, that pensioner is to be put to a choice; he must choose between continuing to take the pension and continuing to take the salary, and if the salary is larger than the pension, this means, despite the statement of the Minister of Finance that the government has no intention of interfering with the sanctity of pension contracts, that this man will be deprived of his pension. It is not, I think, necessary to argue to the house the injustice of such a course. It is completely subversive of the whole principle underlying the pension legislation, and without labouring the matter any further, I feel sure that will be one of the budget provisions which will be changed. It will have to be changed if the justice of the case is to be met and if the obligations of the country to ex-service men are to be carried out.

Another provision of the budget about which I should like to speak for a few minutes, which will not be changed, and which I should