

The Budget—Mr. MacDonald

Edward Island but those from across Canada, at the cavalier fashion in which the Minister of Finance during the course of his budget presentation said that there would be a—

—readjustment of the timetable for the next phase of the Northumberland causeway project in order to minimize the pressures on the peak summertime employment market and maximize winter employment opportunities.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, that statement was the beginning of many editorials, headlines and letters. Eventually a unanimous resolution was passed by the provincial legislature requesting the federal government to reinstate at full flight the construction of this causeway. A strange thing about this business is that it was during the course of the last election campaign that our very dear friend the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill), while visiting on Prince Edward Island, said at last there would be no further holdup, that the work would be going ahead, and that the causeway was not a gift to Prince Edward Island. He said it was not an election bribe, perish the thought, but a sound economic investment for all of Canada.

Mr. Pickersgill: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacDonald (Prince): I am glad to see he still supports that view.

Mr. Pickersgill: I certainly do.

Mr. MacDonald (Prince): Then the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin), who I am also pleased to see here this evening, on October 26 in O'Leary, Prince Edward Island, said that one reason for getting it started at once was that this project would do more to stimulate the economic growth of Prince Edward Island than anything since confederation.

These were great and noble statements, yet somehow or other they seem to be in conflict with the things which the Minister of Finance was saying on the night he delivered his budget speech. I would have liked to have been in the corridor and witnessed the first confrontation of the Minister of Transport with the Minister of Finance following delivery of that speech, for I am sure that if he still registered the same enthusiasm as he does at this moment across the floor of the house, then there must have been an animated conversation between them.

What, Mr. Speaker, is the exact situation with regard to the construction of the causeway? When it was introduced we were told by the Minister of Public Works (Mr.

[Mr. MacDonald (Prince).]

McIlraith) that one of the significant things about the constructing of this causeway would be that much of the work would have to take place in the four summer months, for these were the only months in which, from the standpoint of weather alone, such a project could be undertaken.

Hon. members may remember that on February 14 the Minister of Public Works, answering a question of mine which asked what was the expected date of completion of the Prince Edward Island causeway, replied, as reported at page 1148 of *Hansard*:

It is impossible at this early date to forecast accurately when a project of this magnitude and complexity will be completed. However, with maximum progress this project could be completed in late 1970.

It seems that we are being treated to a spectacle wherein one department, for certain economic reasons which do not really apply anyway to Prince Edward Island or the maritime region, is making certain cut-backs, when the minister responsible for this project must realize that a cut-back cannot in fact take place if the project is to be completed on time. So we have been treated to this sorry mess of statement after statement, some in contradiction of the others.

In this connection I want to read what I thought was an excellent editorial in the Friday, April 1 edition of the Charlottetown *Guardian* entitled "Back to Blunderland":

Orbited into the realm of Alice in Wonderland is the "next phase" of our causeway project as it gets casually kicked around at the Mad Hatter's party at Ottawa. It couldn't get underway this winter because—as the Mock Turtle was at pains to point out—it's the kind of job that must be tackled in the spring. The soil, you know; Island clay. It freezes in the winter and that's not good. But in the spring, tra! la! there'll be a burgeoning of all kinds of things, and our sods will just yearn to be lifted.

● (9:30 p.m.)

Comes the spring; but with it the dispiriting news from the White Rabbit that winter is when this work should really be done. Winter's over now and there'll have to be "a readjustment of the timetable". It would never do to start in the spring, or the summer either for that matter. That would be disastrous because there's an employment boom somewhere and if it hits us down here we could all go bust. Next winter, perhaps . . .

"Have some wine," said the March Hare in an encouraging tone to Alice as she sat aghast at this news. Alice looked around the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I don't see any wine," she remarked. "There isn't any," said the March Hare primly.

Then Tweedledee butted in to explain why there was really nothing to worry about. It might look that way, but, then again it might not. "Contrariwise, if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it is, it ain't."