

Dominion-Provincial Relations

go too far. I thought the ruling was a fairly good one. I thought it left the door open for the then hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra. But the then hon. member for Eglinton was not satisfied, so he got into the act.

Mr. Pickersgill: He could never stay out.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): His statement consisted of a fairly long paragraph but I am sure that I am not doing violence to it if I read only the last half of it.

Mr. Sinclair: Read it all.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): This is to be found at page 3992 of *Hansard*, the present Minister of Finance speaking:

Instead of renewing the discussion we so often have as to whether the rule of strict relevancy is to be applied or whether the custom should prevail of permitting general discussion on the first clause, might I suggest that we are going to lose time by standing on any rule in this matter and that we shall make much more rapid progress if we follow custom and dispose of questions relating to policy on this first clause of the bill.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that you have regard to and be guided by the excellent observations on this point made by the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Finance when they were in opposition.

This was only one of the occasions when these gentlemen took this position. They have taken it over and over again and we supported them when they did so. It was made quite clear that it is the custom of the house to permit a general discussion as to policy on the first clause of a bill and therefore that custom should not be set aside at this time.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Chairman, it is not the custom of the house to allow speeches to be made on clause one of a bill that are at variance with the principle of the bill which has been adopted when the motion for second reading was adopted by the house.

Mr. Sinclair: What a weak excuse!

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Chairman, I am sure the house and you will be very grateful to the resourceful member for Winnipeg North Centre for finding the actual words that were used by hon. gentlemen opposite, particularly the words of the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Green), to whom I had made an earlier reference. However, if the Minister of Finance will just contain himself now I am sure he will help to speed up the business. I suggest to him that the action taken on January 6, by the right hon. gentleman who sits on my right now, followed by the conference in March of 1956, is a precedent which the government of this day might well have followed before taking the

unilateral step it took on Saturday, a step that is bound to serve as a precedent, a step that is not calculated to cement or to further the kind of relationships that should prevail between the provinces on the one hand and the federal government on the other. I say in the face of this situation that the government not only owes it to the provinces and to the house to say what its long term policy in the matter of equalization is, but it also owes it to the provinces and the house to say in precise terms what its long term policy is.

The government has said that this is an interim arrangement. In the absence of meeting the provinces again, why is the Minister of Finance now, in the face of the assurances he and his colleagues gave during the election, not in a position to tell the house what is the government's long term attitude on this matter? What is the limit of the money that it is prepared to give to the provinces? Is it going to be only this or is this really interim? If there is a long term policy, will the amount reach the figure of \$300 million or \$325 million?

That kind of indication would at least give the provinces, particularly the poorer ones, some assurance which they are not now receiving as the result of the equivocal position taken by the Minister of Finance in answer to the questions put to him today on the matter of equalization. On the eve of an election, if that is what the government has in its mind—personally I have some doubts about that at this very early juncture—it owes it to the provinces and the people of Canada to say, "If we are returned to office this is what we will give to the provinces". It is not fair, it is not in accordance with the democratic process, to refuse in the year of an election to indicate how far this administration will go in its fiscal dealings with the provincial governments.

Personally I have a lot of respect for the Minister of Finance. I appreciate the great difficulties and the strain under which he has carried on the administration of the department since he came into office. But, notwithstanding my high personal regard, I say to him that he has not done himself justice in this particular matter. I could say that he has not done himself justice in many matters since he became Minister of Finance—

Mr. Fleming: You mean in any.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): —but I will not say that. There are some things—

Mr. Fleming: One or two?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): —with respect to which my hon. friend has done something—

Mr. Fleming: One maybe?