

tion of the speeches which have been delivered. May I also venture to congratulate him on having the front rows of the opposition benches filled for the first time since this parliament has been in session. He has succeeded in bringing his wanderers back from different parts of the world. I see my hon. friend from West York (Sir Henry Drayton), who has just returned to us from the West Indies; my friend from Vancouver Centre (Mr. Stevens) who has just returned from Great Britain, and my friend the senior member for Halifax (Mr. Black), who has also come back from across the ocean. I say to these hon. members that we are pleased to see them here and glad to see them looking so hale and hearty. I might also say that I imagine not one of them has read the speech of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Robb). I doubt if they have read the amendments which have been moved by the Conservative party and the Progressive group; on the other hand I venture the assurance that they will all vote for the amendment proposed by the opposition, that they will vote against the amendment of the Progressive group and against the budget.

May I say to my hon. friend that I appreciate the manner of his presentation of the point of view of the opposition in its criticism of the budget. I shall endeavour to follow him as well as I can in the order in which he proceeded, and try to touch upon the various subjects with which he dealt. He opened his remarks by a number of references to hon. gentlemen on this side of the house who have spoken during the course of the debate. Most of those references were in the nature of poetic effusions—I do not know that I can follow my hon. friend there. One little quotation, however, did come to my mind, as I listened while he lectured us, and told of what had been done elsewhere as well as what should be done here. As I watched the expression on the faces of those who surround him, I thought of those lines:

And still they gazed and still the wonder  
grew,  
That one small head should carry all he knew.

As far as I was able to follow my hon. friend, he began with references to the public debt. From that he proceeded to a discussion of railway finance, then he dealt with the taxation which is proposed for the coming year. He came next to the tariff and spoke at some length in that connection. Finally he concluded by a reference to the amendment moved by the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Cahan), which he said he was going to read to the house. Unfortunately,

however, my hon. friend did not read the amendment, and for the sake of those members of his party who have just returned perhaps I could not do better than read it in order that they may know exactly what it is they are expected to support.

First of all, what is the present position? The Minister of Finance made a motion to the effect that the house resolve itself into committee of ways and means to consider certain resolutions which he was anxious to present. These resolutions are in accord with similar resolutions which have been moved by the Minister of Finance in previous years. They agree with those resolutions in following lines of fiscal policy which have been consistently maintained by the government from the very day that we took office, and which have brought surpluses instead of deficits, reductions instead of increases in public debt, and reductions instead of increases in taxation. My hon. friend in presenting his motion gave to the house a statement of the finances of the country during the past year. But my hon. friend the leader of the opposition seems to think that the Finance minister should not have touched upon the past year, and rather chided him with having failed to say a little more about the year to come. The Minister of Finance was erring on the safe side when, in giving a statement of the government's policies with respect to taxation and tariff and how they had worked out in the past year, he indicated that in following similar lines for the coming year, he was safe in predicting that the statement he would present at the end of the next financial year would be similar to that which he was then presenting. What was that statement? It was a statement to the effect that the balance sheet of the country showed a surplus, a very large surplus, a surplus running into very many millions of dollars; that it showed reductions in the public debt of many millions, and reductions in taxation as well. Those were the three outstanding features of the budget. The Minister of Finance pointed out wherein, by following along lines he indicated, the government had been able to achieve these results, and he predicted that in the next statement which he would present, following lines parallel to those which had been followed in the past year, there would be another surplus, further reduction of the public debt, and possibly further reductions of taxation. One would have thought that the presentation of a statement of that character would have met with some measure of general appreciation. Instead of that, however, it has brought forth two amendments, each of which is similar to the other in one