

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Hear, hear! Another first for Senator Donahoe!

Senator Donahoe: I appreciate the compliment. I can tell honourable senators that I made careful note of the minister's new title when it was announced in the chamber.

● (1425)

My question concerns a statement the Prime Minister made a little more than a week ago at a press conference which he called. He is quoted in the newspapers as saying that the share of all spending by government has declined from 52 per cent to 34 per cent.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Is that the federal government?

Senator Donahoe: The federal government. Well, it was the federal Prime Minister who said it.

Hon. Jack Marshall: That is Trudeau.

Senator Donahoe: My question is directed to the minister to whom I have already referred in such exact and glowing terms. Is the minister able to confirm that those are accurate figures?

Senator Olson: I believe that the Prime Minister had some basis for using those figures. I will ask him, if the honourable senator wishes, what compilations were used to arrive at those figures. It would depend on what was included, and whether it was just transfers to other governments. In fact, I think he also said, "excluding transfers to provincial governments."

We will have to check to make sure. I know Senator Donahoe will want to co-operate with me so that we can come to an agreement so that we will be adding the same things into the same columns. In some cases there are certain preliminary assumptions which have to be made.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): You have to read the whole speech.

Senator Donahoe: May I ask a supplementary question for the sake of clarity and in order to be of assistance, perhaps, to my honourable friend the minister?

The article in which I read the statement was printed in a newspaper. It also said at the same time that officials of the Department of Finance were baffled by these figures. When they were asked directly whether the figures were accurate, just as I have asked the minister this afternoon, their answer was that they were unable to explain the source of the figures.

My question is simple. The phrases used by those commenting on the Prime Minister's statement were:

It's curious . . . I don't know where they came from . . .

The Prime Minister has what amounts to a photographic memory. But . . . he's not always right.

Sometimes the camera does not open, or the lens does not take the right picture, or something, because he is not always accurate.

Senator Perrault: What are the names of these people? Do you have their names and positions? You must, of course, give your sources.

[Senator Donahoe.]

Senator Donahoe: I would be glad to supply a copy of the article to my learned friend.

Senator Perrault: Just the names. That is all we want.

Senator Donahoe: What names?

Senator Perrault: The names of the people he is quoting.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Homer nods!

Senator Donahoe: I beg your pardon. I misunderstood you. The official of the department who made this statement is a man by the name of John Holding. I am sure that it is possible for my honourable friend the Leader of the Government to verify the statement.

Anyway, Mr. Holding made the statement and my question is very simple: If it is not the problem of the Department of Finance that the Prime Minister is misleading Canadians as a prelude to cutting back on transfers to the provinces, it would seem about to become a problem of the provinces, and I want to know whether the minister can confirm that, in fact, the federal share of all government spending has increased since 1968, when Trudeau came to power.

Senator Olson: Well, the question of course gets into a great deal of difficulty because Senator Donahoe says at the outset that he is quoting from a newspaper, and then he wants me to comment on the accuracy of that. I should like to refer him to Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, Fifth Edition, page 129, citation 357, which says:

A question oral or written must not—

I emphasize the word "not", and then under (e) it says:

—inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are true.

So he has ruled himself out of order by the preamble to his question.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): You never understood the rules in your life.

Senator Olson: I understand them better than you do.

Senator Donahoe: Any port in a storm.

Senator Olson: No way!

Senator Donahoe: "Any port in a storm," I always say.

THE CABINET

HON. H. A. OLSON, P.C.—DESIGNATION

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise on a question of privilege involving the Senate as a whole. In a statement made by Senator Olson, he described himself as the Minister of Economic and Regional Development, but in *Hansard* of March 2 he is listed as Minister of State for Economic Development. The Honourable Herbert Eser Gray is listed as the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. So I think the honourable senator was incorrect when he described himself in this chamber as the Minister of State for