

Queen's Co. Conservative Member Speaks on Budget In The House of Commons

Following is the Hansard report of the speech delivered in the House of Commons by Mr. W. Chester McLure, Progressive Conservative member for Queen's:

Thursday, May 22:

Mr. Speaker: At this late hour I am reminded of the words of a great philosopher who was also a great speaker, and who said he had not come to make a speech, but to make a speech. It was the great visit at mid-winter to the beautiful Clapatra. He looked in and saw her reclining on a couch and he said, "Oh, my beautiful Clapatra, I did not come at this late hour to make a speech. I am not going to make a speech now. I simply wish to see the adjournment of the debate."

Mr. Speaker: I had the privilege last night of moving the adjournment of the debate. I want to say for the benefit of hon. members that I have waited for a considerable time for a member from my Province to speak on behalf of that Province. As they have not seen fit to do so, I believe it is my duty to say a few words at this time. I feel that if any member from my Province had spoken what he would have said would have been more favourable to the Government than what I am about to say.

"After I moved adjournment of the debate last night some of my friends on both sides of the House said to me, 'Well, we will hear tomorrow all about that car ferry, freight and truck traffic, transportation and the non-fulfillment of the confederation pact.' At first I felt that this was a rather embarrassing suggestion, but on second thought I realize it is a compliment, whether or not it is intended as such. If I had a chance to moderate their voices, it is nearly impossible to hear the hon. member who has the floor. I suggest that those who have important conversations to carry on might use the lobby."

Mr. McLure: "Or let them go to their rooms. Mr. Speaker, and have their usual sleep. If I had time this House would surely hear about the Government's neglect in fulfilment of our confederation pact, but another time is coming, and before this House rises, even if it is in September or October, I shall have my say on that subject. I am not afraid to demand from this Government or any other government or any other party the rights that belong to my Province as a province."

ally within the last couple of days, I have felt elated, that the Maritimes are being recognized, so well recognized that I am almost envious that we have not a by-election pending in the Province of Prince Edward Island. When the Government realize that they have a long overdue by-election on their hands they seem to sit up and take notice to warm up to the fact that the Maritimes are a part of Canada.

"But I do not give the entire credit to the by-election. I believe that hon. members who have spoken so ably on the unfulfilled obligations of the Government to the neglected Maritimes have exerted a great deal of influence. I refer to such hon. members as the member for Royal, the hon. member for Cumberland (Mr. Black), the hon. member for Colchester-Hants (Mr. Stanfield) the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Isnor), the hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough (Mr. Kirk), and there have been a great many others. I did hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Bridges), with all his eloquence, would have spoken on the rights of the Maritimes in this debate.

"I wish to say that is afforded me real pleasure when the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. MacNicol), a constituency of that great Province of Ontario, climaxed his efforts by his interest and factual information regarding the neglected Maritimes of this Dominion. It was a grand and glorious feeling for me when he spoke about the best bit of red earth in the world, my Province. It was an assurance to me also that my efforts to keep the Island on the map have not been in vain.

"All this, Mr. Speaker, is a pre-amble to the subject that is before us for debate at this time: one that is important to us all whether we are in private or political life, and that is the subject of the budget.

Mr. Abbott's Budget

"I introducing the budget on April 29 the Minister of Finance informed the House that it was his first. Political history records the fact that it is either the making or the breaking of a man who first delivers the budget. At this time I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance on playing first fiddle. Since his debut in political life seven years ago the hon. gentleman has played many parts in Government. He played second fiddle to the ex-Minister of Finance (Mr. Isley); second fiddle to the ex-Minister of Defence, Hon. J. L. Ralston, and to another ex-Minister, General A. G. L. MacNaughton. Then

through the strategy of the hon. member for Grey North (Mr. Case), he became Minister of Defence. On Tuesday, April 29, we found him calling the tune and playing first fiddle.

"At that time it was interesting to note how the Prime Minister smiled upon him as he called him to the second fiddle seat in the front row, and when the Minister of Finance in his address would draw a long bow with a high note how the Prime Minister beamed upon his protegee with the nicest of Virginian smiles!

"In his budget speech the Minister of Finance told us that a great day is coming. What the people want is the present day to be great. They are not willing to buy futures even on a 29 per cent profit margin. A few days prior to the Minister delivering his budget speech I looked at a picture of him in the Globe and Mail. I do not believe he had a moustache at that time. There I saw a man in comfortable attire, shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbows, earning his \$18,000 annual indemnity by the sweat of his noble brow. It reminded me of the words of a great British Prime Minister who said, 'sweat and tears'—sweat for the Minister of Finance but tears for the taxpayers of Canada.

More Dissatisfaction

"According to the Minister he laboured hard and well to make us believe that his first budget held out more money for all, higher wages for all, higher profits for all, lower taxes for all, lower prices for all, higher production for all industry with floor and ceiling prices to protect producers and consumers. Oh, what a hope! But notwithstanding all this ringing of tambourines and idealistic verbiage, when the searchlight is turned on the budget it reveals at the same time the nigger in the woodpile of hope for better things.

"By this budget will come stifling of private enterprise with less production, more jobless men—and it is reported we have thirty thousand of them in the Maritimes at the present time—more discontent and general dissatisfaction throughout the entire country.

"Having listened attentively to the Minister's budget from the first to the last I wondered who prepared it—I knew who delivered it, and in my opinion it was extremely well delivered. But I noticed particularly the high praise given to the budgets of other years—and I wish the ex-Minister of Finance were in his seat. Then I wondered why the change of ministers in the financial department. Had the previous Minister become over popular, or had he lost caste with the taxpayers of Canada to the detriment of this Government? That question I shall leave for hon. gentlemen to answer.

"When the budget was finished I thought of an old quotation from scripture which is heard frequently. It will be found in Genesis, chapter 27, verse 22:

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"The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

Hon. Mr. MacKenzie: "You have it wrong. Read your Bible again. 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hand is the hand of Esau.'"

Mr. McLure: "Mr. Speaker, I should love to correct the hon. gentleman, but he is mistaken in correcting me."

Mr. MacKenzie: "Get me a Bible."

Fictitious Surplus

Mr. McLure: "Most of us considered it was a typical budget of other years funnelled through a younger minister in a Government effort to eliminate some of the bad taste of other drastic budgets; for instance, failure to increase exemption for both married and single persons.

"We all believe the Government owes every man and woman, if physically fit and capable of doing so, an opportunity to earn a living. The lower paid or unskilled people in the country are earning only a bare existence and are paying their full share of taxation to the revenue department through hidden taxes. They should not have to pay an income tax on top of what they are already paying.

"To my mind, these things are proof sufficient that the ex-Minister of Finance had his hand on the gearshift even if he had to reach over from the back seat.

"Let us look for a moment at the budget. The Minister boomed his surplus of \$352,144,000 as a great feat, the greatest in eighty years. But, Mr. Speaker, I have my doubts whether the Minister himself believes it, because later in his wonderful speech he issued

this warning to all of us—I quote from Hansard at page 2615: 'We should not, however, be led into false optimism, nor should we jump to the conclusion that our present tax structure is much more than adequate to meet all our future requirements.

"Suppose we look for a moment at this financial monstrosity, the budget. In the fiscal year 1946-47 Government expenditures were \$2,632 million in round figures. The revenues from taxes and departmental incomes were \$2,610 million or \$2,612 million. Actually there was a deficit of \$20 million or \$22 million. How then come a surplus?

"You have heard, and it will not hurt for me to repeat it, that the Government sold war assets for \$372 million which no doubt had cost the taxpayers over \$1 billion or probably \$2 billion, and this \$372 million was called a revenue. But I will bet you the Minister of Finance earmarked it as non-recurring revenue."

Mr. Abbott: "It was classified as expenditures when the stuff was paid for."

Mr. McLure: "They took into account the deficit of \$20 million and called the balance, \$352 million, a surplus. I wonder if any chartered bank would call it a surplus. I wonder if a business firm would stand before a banker whom it owed and declare a surplus shown in this manner.

Taxpayers Know Better

"This whole budget, to say the least, is questionable bookkeeping. Or suppose a manufacturer resorted to the practice of selling part of his plant equipment to show a yearly profit. Governments may resort to this kind of accounting, but I do not believe the

country will swallow the bait.

"To submit a budget surplus by the methods I have outlined, and announcing a forecast surplus for the next year of \$190 million or \$200 million, is in my opinion an insult to the intelligence of the taxpayers at a time like this, when the country is groaning and staggering under its present load and crying for relief.

"The Minister, in bidding for a popular budget, hit right out with high income tax. He should have raised the exemption on single taxpayers to \$1,200, on married taxpayers without dependents to \$2,000 or thereabouts, and married taxpayers with dependents to \$2,500.

"No tax relief for the married women who work! Evidently the Government do not want women any more, even if nurses and school teachers are now scarce. No assistance to new business and very little to old established firms.

No Relief

"Business in general must be disappointed with this budget. Canada and Canadians fought a great war in the name of freedom and in the defence of the dignity and morale worthy of ordinary men. Supposedly we are back now to peace time. Why should this Government now deny to our citizens the privileges and responsibilities of running their own businesses? What freedom they could now run their own businesses. They look forward to the casting off of the unbearable bureaucratic shackles.

"No relief for business, no relief for farmers, no treaties for fishermen! This budget will continue to strangle the treasury of many millions of dollars more of the taxpayers' money.

"This budget appears to me to be the essence of the economic muddle in which the Government finds itself today. It strikes at the very root of the effort to get production established by private enterprise.

"The first and most vital task that the Government should perform and that they should now perform is to clear up this economic mess resulting from years of socialist incompetence, misadministration and reckless financing. That is the task that the Government should apply its efforts to, and this would restore confidence both at home and abroad in Canada's march forward.

"I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether I would term this an election budget, but it has all the earmarks of a leadership budget—page the hon. the Minister of Finance. A Liberal newspaper in my home town, Charlottetown, commenting editorially on this budget, said: 'What a budget, and they were so mean with little Prince Edward Island.'

"That has reference of course to the provincial agreements. Another million or two would have been just chicken feed, but we had to scratch for every nickel we received.

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GREENDAL'S

Corrected Correctly

"There was one peculiar thing about this budget. Before it was delivered there did not seem to be any secrecy about it; there was no secrecy about the terms of the budget. For instance, the Minister of Finance, before he delivered his budget, announced that there would be a surplus of over \$200 thousand."

Mr. Abbott: "Million."

Mr. McLure: "Million."

Mr. Sinclair (Vancouver North): "Read a little more carefully."

Mr. McLure: "Let me hear that voice again."

Mr. Sinclair: "Read a little more carefully. If you are going to read you might as well read correctly."

An hon. Member: "You read too."

Mr. Sinclair: "I speak every single word. I don't read."

Mr. McLure: "For instance, the Minister of Finance announced over a month ago that there would be a surplus of over \$200 million."

Mr. Sinclair: "That is right, \$200 million."

Mr. McLure: "You are listening, are you? The leader of His Majesty's Opposition foresaw, some sixty days prior to that, a thirty per cent income tax reduction which he announced. My leader must have had some inside information; whether he was in collaboration with the Minister of Finance—"

Mr. Abbott: "I can assure my hon. friend as to that; there was no collaboration."

Mr. McLure: "It is not for me to say, but he was only one per cent higher than the Minister."

Mr. Abbott: "No one was more surprised than the leader of the Opposition."

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Ellen's Diary

By an Island Farmer's Wife

(Continued from Page 14)

to supplant the old one. While it still needs masculine hands to add the finishing touches, it is an improvement over the former, which had been fashioned out of supple maple saplings bent over to form an arch, though these had supported the vines well for a period of years. The discarded maple pieces were cut in stove lengths after a battle with their toughness and consigned then to the woodbox to assist in hastening the farmer's dinner. "The woodbox, Ellen" that is what James is calling to me now. "The apple trees and the rose bush came this evening—I put the trees down cellar but the rose bush is in the woodbox—I didn't know where to put it." Jeanie and I were absent at the time, having gone to attend a visiting play in the community hall down the river road. Jack motored us there and we homed with Mr. and Mrs. A. walking up in tonight's velvety darkness from lane's end. The entertainment was most enjoyable, being a light comedy drama, refreshing to folks, new by day taken up with sterner things. And so after years of wishing for it, I own a yellow climbing rose! But James continues to try to keep up his line of communication with me and if "my words fly up, my thoughts remain below" his too go up and beyond my hearing—all but one: "Bed" it says.

Until tomorrow — Diary — Good-night.

Inattentive Members

"I have noticed, Mr. Speaker, as you have noticed, that as soon as hon. members rise to speak in this debate a great many members hike for the nearest exit as if somebody had called out 'All ashore that's going ashore'. I have kept a partial register of this and I have found that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) had a full House, and in my humble opinion he deserved it, whether he pleased them or otherwise. But as hon. members on different sides began to debate the budget the attendance petered out from a full House to a score of deuces and one queen.

"I have kept a register of attendance when the hon. members were speaking and on a great many occasions there was barely a quorum in the House. But what is the difference? We are all speaking to Hansard, to our constituents, so after all we are all on a par.

"As I look at the Government side today I am grateful for a better attendance than most hon. members have had, and I would say thank you to them for that. I will say this, that if there were no Hansard reporters in this House I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I could fill this chamber in the next ten minutes. If there was no record to go to the country of what I would say—and that is true of a great many others.

"In this budget debate I have not missed one sitting of the House. I have listened to all the speeches on the Maritimes except the one delivered by the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Brooks) and I could not help being absent on that occasion: I was called out of the House. Some of the speeches I am not in a position to understand fully, and I regret that very much indeed. When hon. members speak in that classical language, French, unless they go slowly and carefully, as the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) and the hon. member for Eglington (Mr. Fleming) do, I am at a loss to understand what they say.

"While I was born in a French settlement in Prince Edward Island, known as North Rustico—and I was proud to be born in that settlement—I always held it against the French people there that they wanted to learn English, but we were not privileged to learn French. However, the other day on happening to meet one of the French members of the redistribution committee I interpreted to him what I wanted to make known with regard to Queens County. I said this to him: 'Ne touchez pas Queens'.

Maritime Spokesmen

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