

Old Age Security Act

ing out now and again and can certainly stand a flushing out now.

Our approach to federal-provincial relations goes far beyond equalization. There is the whole question of tariffs and transportation policy, a host of areas which have been left relatively unexplored, except as to user-pay, in terms of the welfare of the whole country. I thought I would make those things clear.

The hon. member for Gloucester also mentioned that it had been the policy of our party to allocate too many resources to help the poor people. I listened to him say that this morning. The Progressive Conservative party has never taken that position. What it has said is that we must begin paying more than lip service to developing a larger economic pie, because if we fail to do so we shall experience great difficulty in supporting economic programs to help the disadvantaged. It is in that area the emphasis must lie over the next few years.

This does involve the cutting back of government. It does involve giving up some programs which I for one, as a member of parliament, would dearly like to see. I represent the people in the national capital area. One of the issues in this House has been the question of grants in lieu of taxes. The mayor of Ottawa has said it is worth \$150 a household because the government is not carrying its weight with respect to grants in lieu of taxes in the city. I would love to have the luxury of being able to say that the government can give that \$150 a household, but I cannot honestly support that now, much as I support the principle. What is worse, the reason I cannot advocate it is not because something has happened in the world. It is not because there has been a change somewhere in the country—ours is still a rich country with large resources. It is that something that has happened to the government which has wasted those resources and opportunities over ten years so that this inequity cannot be rectified.

When the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) asks the government whether it will accede to changing the grants in lieu of taxes this year and rectifying the situation, the hon. member is engaging in window dressing because he knows that the policies of the party he has supported since he has been here have brought about an economic situation which makes it impossible for him to get his wish and impossible for me to get mine. It also makes it impossible for a lot of members of the House to have a great many of the programs they dearly want for their constituents.

That is the tragedy of the last ten years. It is not restraint, it is what led up to it. The attitude of government in the last ten years has been that we had a bottomless pit, that they could dig into it and continue to dig into it and there was no tomorrow. They did this in spite of warnings from the Economic Council and its predecessor, from every responsible organization in Canada, that there was a bottom to the pit and that the government's spending habit had to stop. Now we find ourselves in a position where, indeed, it has to stop.

Mr. Watson: What about the four billion in mortgage payments?

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The hon. member mentions the mortgage payments. Somehow or other we must begin to create an atmosphere of incentive in order that we can build again. Mr. Speaker, this government spills almost as much as it spends. The hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson) mentioned the mortgage program. He says to us that it is too rich for Canada.

Mr. Watson: Four billion dollars.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He dearly wishes he had brought in the mortgage program and the property tax deduction proposal himself because it is an imaginative program. But that is not the important thing about his intervention. It is this. While the government were saying that Canadians were too rich to deserve a tax break, that the home owners, 60 per cent of whom make less than \$18,000, were the filthy rich and could not be helped, they were entering into and defending a deal for four office complexes in the Ottawa region under lease-back arrangements, the results of which were going to cost the government \$179 million more than would have been the case had they gone the more conventional route. And this is not an assertion by me, it is an assertion by a Senate committee, headed by Liberals including Liberal Senator Everett and Senator Giguère, a committee which condemned the government for its flagrant squandering of public money, money which might be used to help constituents in Laprairie.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): That's the pity.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): As my hon. friend says, that's the pity. We have come to the point at which one of the central institutions for the public good in Canada, CMHC, is being examined by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and rumors are that charges will be laid. That is maladministration. That is waste. That is some kind of wrongheadedness. But that is what we have come to. We have come to the position at which, with respect to Les Terrasses de la Chaudière, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) at the opening defended the indefensible and said it was an excellent transaction for the government. Robert Campeau stood on his hind legs and grinned into the television cameras and said this was a good deal for Campeau and a good deal for the federal government. He was only half right.

● (1642)

An hon. Member: What about the bill?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I will tell hon. members how this relates to the bill. There is not another member of parliament who would wish more than I that the \$179 million which was wasted on Les Terrasses de la Chaudière, the money spent on things which are going to be found out in the investigation of York Place, the glass monstrosity of the Bank of Canada which will cost us millions and which is a monument to the architect rather than to good sense, and the \$210 million blown on the unemployment insurance program, could go to the objectives spoken about so eloquently by the Minister