

*The Address—Mr. Crestohl*

fifth commandment teaches us a very subtle lesson on how we should treat our elders. It reads:

"Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

That is the enjoinder of this commandment. I am not a clergyman, but I am the son of a clergyman and therefore take a little poetic liberty which, together with the immunity provided by this house, may enable me to encroach upon what may be interpreted as a sermonette.

The commandment which I have just quoted is the only one that carries with it a promise of reward to those who will observe it. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee". My neighbour to my left, the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay (Mr. Ashbourne), reminds me that in Sunday school class this commandment was called the first commandment with a promise. Biblical scholars have many interpretations for this commandment. The one I should like to emphasize is a version given to me by a friend of mine, Mr. Barney Aaron, a recognized scholar of biblical lore and literature in Montreal, who points out that this commandment means that you should honour not only your own father and mother, but also everyone else's father and mother. These in reality are the fathers and the mothers of the nation and if you honour them, then the reward is promised. Your own days will be long, you too will grow old to be a father or a mother. You too will be honoured in your own old age and in your own country where you will have honoured your own elders.

I should like to add another interpretation. This commandment speaks not only to the individual, but also to the nation as a whole. The words, "that thy days may be long upon the land", teach us the following lesson: That nation which lives in a land that honours its elders, builds a strong moral fibre, will continue to live in happiness upon its soil, will be free from the conquest that results from moral disintegration from within, and will be strong to repel assault from without.

By the adoption of this act, Mr. Speaker, the parliament of Canada, the people of Canada, give public and universal expression of their observance of the fifth commandment. This epoch-making law elevates every Canadian, and is in stride with the social justice program of this government and as the minister rightly declared, it places our country in the forefront of the nations of the entire world in the field of progressive legislation for the welfare of its people, and bespeaks for our country a lofty moral future.

It is so typical and characteristic of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) to have treated this subject with the tenderness with which he did. He is eminently suited by temperament, by upbringing and by character to sense fully the consideration with which such a delicate matter should be handled. This was beautifully illustrated by a photograph which appeared in the press two weeks ago showing the minister with all his attention riveted on his mother in the midst of a happy family group. I have the photograph from the *Ottawa Citizen* of Wednesday, November 7, 1951. It bears the title, "Happy Family Reunion", and the reference under the picture reads:

"Paying one of his rare visits to his home town, Pembroke, Health Minister Paul Martin took time off to attend the Pembroke Rotary club dinner in company with his elderly mother."

I hope the minister will forgive me the personal reference, but I am moved to mention it by the symbolic coincidence that he should appear in the genuine role of a doting son to a greying mother on the same day that he was piloting through parliament a piece of legislation spelling out the love and affection of all Canadian children for all Canadian fathers and mothers. This sentimental touch epitomizes the profound and genuine understanding of the duties which the younger generation should constantly have for all fathers and mothers who, as I previously stated, constitute the fathers and the mothers of the nation.

I should like now to make one or two observations with respect to the application of the act in practice. The theory of paying a pension universally to rich and poor alike carries with it a dignity commensurate with our desire to preserve for our senior citizens the self-respect to which they are entitled by age alone, if by nothing else. It eliminates the stigma, in my judgment, of relief or charity and clothes it with the stature of a reward well deserved and well earned for many years of service. I am anxious that this sense of dignity be preserved on the administrative level where, if we are not careful, there is a danger that the entire philosophy of the act may slip from its elevation. I should like the administration of this act to be as generous and as considerate as it deserves to be. I am not unmindful of the great caution that must be exercised in the spending of public funds, but this is one expenditure that I should like to see made with a greater emphasis on the payment than on the caution.

The officials in charge should be men with charity in their hearts and a kindness in their souls. These humane qualifications will