

*Increased Cost of Living*

create more favourable economic conditions in those regions which are suffering, and at the same time could be used to combat on a regional basis inflationary influences that exist in those regions of Canada which are experiencing a business cycle that has heated up too much.

The amendment also provides for a redistribution of wealth. The hon. member, when speaking for his party, said the government is unconcerned about this problem and has done nothing to solve it. I wonder where the hon. member has been for the last three years, because I think this parliament has done a good deal in the way of enacting measures which are designed for no other purpose than the redistribution of wealth and the spreading out of our productive capacity.

I do not know where the hon. member was when we passed the Canada Pension Plan, which surely was designed to contribute to the redistribution of wealth, or when we increased family allowances and made them payable to young people who stayed in school between 17 and 18 years of age. Not many months ago we passed an act to provide allowances to students and unemployed people who went to vocational school and undertook further training or retraining. The federal government raised the money for this program mainly by increasing the taxes of those who could afford to pay. In this way there was a redistribution of income to those who were unemployed, and they are going to vocational school with this allowance. Surely, all the amendments to the housing act allowing for a greater contribution by the federal government to low rental housing, urban redevelopment and slum clearance, are designed to redistribute wealth. Therefore, I do not think this government or parliament have been unconscious of the problems that exist in Canada which the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam raised.

Some time ago the government enunciated a policy which has been commonly known as the war on poverty and established in the Privy Council office the secretariat for this program. This is a program dealing with labour mobility, housing, training and assistance—all designed to alleviate poverty in Canada. Surely this program was designed for no other purpose than the equitable redistribution of wealth in Canada and to give to those people living at the bottom of the income scale an opportunity to improve their economic life.

● (5:50 p.m.)

For the hon. member to say that we have been totally unconscious of the situation is I [Mr. Basford.]

think totally incorrect. It is an irresponsible statement coming, as it does, from the leader of the New Democratic Party.

**Mr. Douglas:** On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker; I do not think the hon. member will find in the record that I said at any time the government was unconscious of this problem. I think they are only too conscious of it, but I said they were negligent and derelict in their duty in dealing with it. I think they were fully conscious of it. I would be prepared to excuse them were they not conscious, but the fact they were conscious is where the fault lies.

**Mr. Basford:** We, on this side of the house, are very conscious of our duties and have always fulfilled them when we saw them. Therefore, to suggest that we are derelict in our duty, as the hon. member has done, can only mean to me that we have been unconscious of it.

**Mr. Douglas:** I do not accept the premise of the hon. member's remark.

**Mr. Basford:** In June, we passed in this house the Canada Assistance Plan which was described by hon. members opposite as the most comprehensive measure that has ever been passed in Canada. It was designed for the sole purpose of using federally raised taxes to support and assist people at the bottom of our economic scale.

The last part of the amendment reads: "Particularly in view of the rising cost of living." I should like to put this phrase into perspective for the record, but not as a justification of the fact we should all be happy with the increase in the cost of living which we have experienced. Every member in this house is concerned about the increase in the cost of living in Canada, but I think it should be put into perspective. I do so particularly in view of the fact that we had a witness before the consumer credit committee, Professor Kragh from Sweden. He is head of the National Institute of Economic Research in Sweden which is designed to serve the same function as the Economic Council of Canada. He spoke to us about the increasing consumer price index or cost of living in Sweden, and we spent a very useful afternoon with this foreign observer.

I would like to put on the record some statistics published by the International Monetary Fund, international financial statistics for August of this year, which show the change in the cost of living in 27 countries,