

Suggested Interest-free Loans

I received this afternoon a letter from a citizen of Saint-Michel parish, in the Bellechasse constituency, the fairest of the province of Quebec—where people get the lowest per capita income throughout Canada. In my opinion, this is not normal, in view of the present possibilities.

A certain Mr. Roy wrote to me as follows, and I quote:

Having learned of the famous Trudeau-Benson plan on the radio and in newspapers, I would consider it as coming from two complete idiots.

Of course, I would not call them idiots. I go on with the quotation:

We, the small and average wage-earners, are we taken for idiots?

If salary increases are limited to 6 per cent, who will be affected do you think? Surely not those in the \$20,000 to \$40,000 salary range, but rather the small and average wage-earners.

Why should these small wage-earners have to suffer from inflation?

He concludes by saying:

By their plan, Trudeau and Benson are protecting high-salaried people and capitalists.

Those are his remarks. As for myself, I am his spokesman.

This citizen will be happy tomorrow when he learns that his message has reached Parliament. He wanted to convey what he had in mind, no matter the words he used. He simply means that he has not enough money to live and that he is disgusted to see that in order to fight inflation, those who do not earn enough money already will be asked to settle for a 6 per cent raise while more powerful organizations—such as the Bank of Montreal, as one could read in the weekend newspapers—are allowed to realize an increase in revenue of 27 per cent, which somewhat exceeds 6 per cent.

Those who read newspapers and notice these things are shocked to see that Parliament, which is supposed to defend the interests of the people, is not doing anything. They expect us to assume our responsibilities.

Mr. Roy added:

We have been laughed at for too long.

I know that nobody wants to laugh at the poor people. I am really convinced of that. I know that Parliament, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) or any former Minister of Finance did not want to laugh at anybody. But it is still a shame that the people who hold such an office are not giving orders but carrying them out. Of course, some decisions have to be taken, and people like the man

who wrote to me are in a good position to see what is going on, but they are not always able to judge clearly enough the decisions taken. They then write us letters like the one I just read to you, and that shows what the present mood is.

And that, I feel, is why we must adopt this motion which is not likely to bring about a revolution, but to enable the government, in the field of finance, to liberate what is now frozen, to enable our unemployed workers, as the previous speaker said a few minutes ago, to find work and become useful members of the community, and also our students, over 600,000 of them, some of which visit our offices, inquiring about summer job opportunities. We all want to give them work, but we are all unable to do so, and they go off dissatisfied because they think that in September they will have to get back to university and spend more money when they did not have, during their holidays, any opportunity to earn a few dollars to pay for it. We talk about free education, but it remains that one has always personal spendings to make.

Mr. Roy ends his letter as follows:

Perhaps we are idiots and small wage-earners, but we still have a good memory.

What does this mean? This means that if something is not done to meet the proposed goal, other means will have to be taken. We will have to elect other members, another government.

Governments have come and gone for a hundred years, but the financial system which supports our administration has remained the same. For that reason we are always in a vicious circle: in alleged periods of peace we should have prosperity.

If I have four or five boys at home and if every morning we have to quarrel for two hours in order to know what we will do, and if we need three more hours to make a decision, it will be noon before we have decided to go to work. A good part of the day is over. How can we work effectively during the rest of the day? How can we achieve anything!

In wartime, every country is experiencing difficulties with respect to finance, economic organization and service. But in peacetime, when we should have some prosperity, how could we explain, Mr. Speaker, that big 20-year-old 200 pound 6-foot-2-inch fellows are glued to their seats, while we, the responsible grown-ups, tell them: Listen, you must understand the situation, the country is broke. But where do those damned bucks come from?