

Distribution of Goods and Services

to have another kind of poverty. We have the type of poverty that is hitting our rural districts. People are being forced off the land because they can no longer earn a living for themselves. This is applicable particularly to the younger people.

We find that no less a person than Andre Saumier, assistant deputy minister in the new Department of Regional Economic Expansion, said there is little point in forcing a farmer to leave the Gaspé to join the ranks of the jobless in Montreal. He said that sweeping plans for redevelopment of poverty stricken rural areas should not be launched unless the people displaced by the program can be absorbed elsewhere in the economy. This is what Mr. Saumier told the Senate Committee on poverty yesterday.

As I say, in our cities we find more and more people living in conditions of poverty. Let me give as an example a situation in our capital city which has been drawn to my attention. This is not my riding, but the report was given to me by a woman whom I know very well. She and her husband are both engaged in real estate work in Ottawa. I shall read her letter because what she has to say is very well put:

Here are some details of a young family which may help you illustrate the desperate need in this city for low rent housing. I shall try to be brief.

Mr. and Mrs. Vincent X have, for the past 3 years or so, been tenants in a property we manage—

Then, she gives the address.

They have 9 children—ages 6 to 15 yrs. All attending school.

As a result of an accident at work (for which he received no compensation) Mr. X's brain was injured and he became an epileptic—very severe seizures. To compound his troubles he developed a stomach ulcer—during a seizure last month it burst and he hemorrhaged fatally.

He had received his notice to vacate in January. Because he could not find a place we gave him another month—no luck—and then he died. Because of the circumstances we allowed Mrs. X another month. She was to have been out yesterday. Despite her efforts she could not get a place to live. We are allowing her this last month but she will have to get out at the end of May. (At the rental today the building is not even producing enough to pay operating expenses, let alone major repairs which must be effected immediately. It is not economically feasible, in fact it is financial disaster, to keep renting the units as single family dwellings unless the rents are doubled—rather than be a party to that we are changing its use and converting to smaller rental units. In the immediate past, before this tight housing situation, and despite the fact that the rents were low—this building was a heartbreak to manage—low income and welfare families were so often dirty and destructive and would not keep the rent paid. At present, in this row there are two families in arrears of rent—one of them for nearly \$300).

Even if inadequate accommodation at \$175 or \$200 was available (it is not because of the 9 children) Mrs. X is allowed \$100 rental allowance—anything above that is taken out of their food allowance. Goodness knows, the children are thin enough now.

There are houses, expropriated by the N.C.C. which are vacant and boarded up but there is no low rent housing available—welfare recipients are only allowed to occupy 10% of a low-rent housing development. This desperate situation was brought on in part by the city, too, using its expropriation powers with gay abandon while not having a backlog of housing available. Our ward alderman told me there are 60 homeless families. The cost to the city, housing them in marginal hotels is enormous.

If Mrs. X does not find a place to live her family will be broken up. Mrs. X is a good mother, loving and kind and her children are clean, polite and well looked after. She has had so many problems with a husband who drank, out of sheer misery and frustration, and trying to manage on an inadequate income—that she is receiving psychiatric treatment.

● (9:10 p.m.)

I would be afraid of what might happen if she is separated from her children. She is unnaturally calm.

The older men have made last minute efforts to find something—and I am doing my best—the Huard's are Protestants but our church does not seem to have any organization to help them.

No one else would help them, either. Let me refer to another case of poverty. I could talk about this for a long time. There are many cases of this type in all parts of Canada. Here is a letter from an individual who lives in my own city, a woman I know very well:

We have a son 38 now out of work. The man he used to work for hasn't anything for himself, let alone anyone else and he usually puts furnaces in houses. Things are getting so people cannot afford even such necessities as furnaces. Our son was only working casual labour so has not been able to save for a rainy day so to speak. And having no trade complicates matters a bit. He also had a nervous breakdown a month ago and is still under Dr.'s care. Now on top of that the building inspector has been around and we have to sign a paper to say it would be a hardship if we didn't allow our son and his wife to live in the illegal suite in the basement of our home, as if it wasn't enough for him to be unemployed and sick. What is to become of him with no trade? He is not alone either.

I could read you many such letters from pensioners, young people, elderly people, incapacitated people and ordinary people, all of whom are poor. What are we going to do? We cannot shut our eyes to this situation. If we do, we do so at our peril. I think only of those citizens who will turn to crime as a result of poverty.