

doubling of the production of Buffalo aircraft, with the Twin Otter still a world seller, and the Dash 7 finding an ever more promising place in world markets. I think of Bristol Aircraft out in Winnipeg and of a number of contractors for my department in Nova Scotia and the Atlantic provinces engaged in high and medium technology industry of a kind which is blossoming all over the country.

When we assess ourselves, Mr. Speaker, I believe we should also assess our social advantages, because we cannot just talk about our country in economic terms, even though the economic and the social are very much intertwined. We should consider the advantages which we have in place and which other nations do not—developments which have largely taken place in the last ten years under this government.

I remember particularly the first time I ran for parliament in 1968 going from door to door in my constituency of York North, knocking at doors and being greeted sometimes by little children, and sometimes by grandmothers or grandfathers who looked sort of cowed and beaten, who had to live with their daughters and sons or sons-in-law or daughters-in-law—we all know the tensions this can create. Grandchildren are wonderful for a couple of hours, so they tell me, but to be there all the time may not be so enjoyable, and having to be a guest in the home of the children of one's family, in a garret or basement, can be soul-destroying. It destroys one's dignity, one's self-respect. I do not say we have gone far enough, but we have gone further in the last ten years than in all previous history. That is pretty good, and I hope we go further.

I ran a seminar for senior citizens in my constituency. I run these seminars for various groups—for businessmen, for youth. On one day I ran a seminar in the morning for youth and in the afternoon for senior citizens. We offered transportation to the senior citizens because mine is a large riding for an urban constituency. It is located to the north of Toronto and takes in many small communities. I do not think we had a single call to our offer of transportation, although there might have been just one or two. But the people came in their own cars or those of their friends and jammed the hall. That would not have happened ten years ago. The people were well dressed; they were well fed. They were happy and they had dignity, self-respect, and I was tremendously moved to see that difference which had taken place in just ten years.

It is my belief that you can judge the quality of a society more by the way it treats its senior citizens than by any other measure. I include along with senior citizens other people in society who may not be capable of looking after themselves.

I do not think we need to worry much about the young or about the middle aged. We can take our knocks and do our thing. It does not hurt us. It helps us. It is a sort of crucible of life. And it is the spirit which built this country. But I think we should know that the society in which we live will allow us the dignity of security and independence in our senior years. I put a very high priority on that, perhaps for very selfish reasons, because one day I will be a senior citizen myself, that is, if I am lucky.

The Budget—Mr. Danson

When one is in the productive years one can change jobs, go back to school, start a business, or even do something as ridiculous as going into politics. But one has that flexibility and you have the time. But senior citizens have neither the flexibility nor the time. I would not want to start judging what a senior citizen is. I do not believe 65 is a magic age—I have seen some very dynamic people who were in their mid-eighties and nineties. And I have seen others who had been in a tough production job on a line for 20 years, and who were really senior citizens much younger. But what is important to me is that we have removed the fear and restored dignity to those people.

Another thing which is important to people in those years, Mr. Speaker, is that they have seen under Liberal governments medical insurance plans built up, which means that a family is no longer devastated by the occurrence of an illness or an operation. We forget about that. We take these things for granted. It is true that they are costly, and we probably now have to worry about the cost of the delivery of health services, but I would much rather worry about that than their availability. I do not want to have to worry about people losing their life savings, their homes or their businesses. Losses like that absolutely destroy families, but that was part of every-day life in our society not many years ago. We have this as a base to our society in Canada, and I think that is particularly important.

● (1712)

Then there are those things of the spirit, and I mention this particularly because when the Minister of Finance was minister of Indian affairs and northern development he established more areas for national parks in Canada than had ever been established in the whole history of our country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Danson: That is a very special heritage for which we Canadians can be grateful. I come from Toronto, and I think of Algonquin Park, which is just 150 miles north of Toronto. I have often wondered who the politicians and civil servants were who set this preserve aside. It was about 100 years ago. It was just as remote—or perhaps more so—from populated centres then as the new national parks are now.

Mr. Darling: Don't forget it is in the paradise riding, my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Danson: That makes it even more beautiful. It joins Muskoka and Parry Sound. It is a beautiful place to which thousands and thousands of Canadians go weekly for recreation. There is a game preserve there. We are properly and carefully cropping the lumber there without destroying the natural environment. Some day, perhaps 100 years from now, I hope someone will stand up in this House and speak about Jean Chrétien. I have done some research on the Ontario public servants of that time under Sir Oliver Mowat, the premier at that time—obviously a Liberal premier—who had such foresight and sensitivity.