

Government Orders

debate, not to give the impression that he and I are poles apart on this, but there are one or two points that need some discussion.

The issue of transfer payments generally gets characterized in several ways as handouts, as assistance of some sort and I suppose in the general broad term it is assistance. I completely reject the notion of the handout context that some people want to talk about from time to time.

The best way to illustrate my point is to go back in history just a bit to what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians call Confederation. To most in this Chamber and in this country Confederation conjures up the period of 1867. But for Newfoundlanders, when we talk about Confederation we refer to the great Confederation debates of 1946 to 1948, the two referenda of 1948 and the actual becoming part of Canada or, as we like to say, when the two dominions became one, because that is in effect what happened and what technically happened on March 31, 1949. Therefore when we talk of Confederation we mean that particular period.

At that time we entered into a partnership. We did not apply to go on a welfare role. We entered into a partnership. In the process we gave up certain things.

We stood by and had our small but rather vital and vibrant manufacturing base destroyed. We had a heavy trade going with what we called the Boston states, the New England states. We had a particularly lively trade going in fish and fish products, for example. It was a trade that was essentially wiped out by the coming of Confederation in 1949. We had some other manufactured commodities which had to take second place to the new central Canadian reality, the Ontario and Quebec reality, in terms of manufacturing prerequisites.

• (1210)

Therefore we have always seen transfer payments not in the context of some kind of handout but rather as part of a partnership that was entered into in 1949. As Newfoundlanders we have never made any apologies for the fact that we have a system of established programs financing and equalization payments.

I see my friend from Calgary West has taken his seat again. We have to choose our words well around here. We are not allowed to draw attention to the absence of a member, but we can draw attention to his presence.

This is the theme on which I was speaking last week. I understand the member for Calgary West speaks from a somewhat different perspective and so he should. We only have to look at the average family incomes of the ridings that he and I respectively represent.

I represent a riding where the average family income is \$24,900 and my friend from Hillsborough who spoke a moment ago represents a riding where the average family income is \$24,220. Of course the gentleman from Calgary West represents

a riding where the average family income is of the order of \$41,000.

If one looks to his colleague, who was there a moment ago and who has now joined us at least temporarily, the gentleman from Capilano—Howe Sound, he represents a riding where the average family income is \$52,500. That is quite a difference. He is sitting with the gentleman from Scarborough East where the average family income is \$44,800. I can see why they are talking; they have a fair amount in common. I say to my friend from Scarborough East that I hope he will persuade the gentleman from Capilano—Howe Sound to stay on. We could use his talent on this side of the House.

We represent very different perspectives. The gentleman from Lethbridge and I have a fair amount in common because the kind of average family income in that riding would be of the order of \$35,000 which is a bit higher than in my riding.

It is not a bad indicator. If one looks at average family incomes in various parts of this country, one will very often understand why the delegates, the MPs from those areas, are saying very different things.

That is why I have special compassion for my friend from Lethbridge. I wonder how he is managing in that caucus where all the high priced discussion is going on when he does not represent a very high priced riding, not in dollar terms at least. However I wish him the best. I know he is equal to the task. He has been in politics long enough not to need very much advice from me on the subject.

Let us come back very briefly to Bill C-3, the equalization bill. It does two or three things I am rather happy about. Transfer payments generally help ensure that a province will have the means to provide a certain basic level of service. Surely that is the whole principle of equalization. That is what it is all about. What the Minister of Finance is doing here today is ensuring by building a little more certainty into the program that we can continue to discharge that mandate which is the principle under equalization.

The whole business of transfer payments does something else. It provides for the mobility of people across the country. Those who have been here before have heard me talk about how people from my province literally have gone to the four corners of the earth, but particularly to the four corners of Canada to work.

There are of the order of 10,000 or so in Fort McMurray in the riding of Athabasca. There are many thousands and tens of thousands in southern Ontario and all over the country working on the CP rail lines, including in Saskatchewan and in British Columbia. We in Canada are contributing to the economic stability of the country by having that mobility of people. If we have labour skills then they are accessible not only in terms of the province of origin but right across the country. That is a good thing. It flies in the face of all the myths we hear about people from Newfoundland and from Atlantic Canada generally being too lazy to get up and go where the jobs are. That is a theme you