

After Recess

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. BOURGEOIS (Translation): Mr. Speaker, when the house rose at six o'clock, I was referring to those who had abandoned the land where they could have earned a livelihood but preferred to live miserably in cities where they increase the congestion. One may argue that the reason they left the countryside was because they could no longer earn a living, the price obtained for their products was too low to permit them to continue farming. I deny the truth of such an argument. In most cases our country folks were attracted, lured to the cities by the hope of finding an easier livelihood. However, it was a deception; too often they met hardships, sometimes ruin, financial disaster, or became physical and moral wrecks.

One should never cease to proclaim the fact that the French Canadian, owing to his traditions, fitness and physical strength, is especially adapted to live on the land, and I have no hesitation in stating it is one of the noblest occupations and most necessary to the existence of a nation. It is as a farmer that the French Canadian contributes his greatest share to the nation's activities.

But what means must we resort to, may be asked, in order to induce the farmer to return to the land of his forebears which he sold often for a mess of pottage, or unfortunately lost. There is no lack, in Quebec, Ontario, or the other provinces, of charitable institutions, philanthropic associations who would voluntarily take charge of distributing relief which might be supplied, they are in a much better position than our government organization to seek the unrooted farmer in cities where he idles away his time, inquire into his former life, his fitness, his means, the members of his family and what help may be expected from them; then through the assistance given by the government, reestablish him on the land where he can build again a home and live in relative comfort. It is all that he can hope for and there is nothing to prove that the farmer, with average ability, possessing health, energy, and leading a good life, cannot find on the land his food, clothes and a shelter.

I have endeavoured to describe, in its outlines the government's past policy which, to my mind, has borne fruit, also, perhaps, its future policy as I see it, and, may I add, as I would wish it to be. The first duty of the state is to balance its budget. This task, the government is fulfilling, notwithstanding our difficult situation. The government must also, in a period of unrest as the one we are under-

[Mr. Bourgeois.]

going, relieve the sufferings and poverty which necessarily appeal to the public. This task which is strewn with difficulties, because in fulfilling it the government risks burdening too heavily the treasury and, on the other hand, it must also increase the load which the rate-payers have to bear. Those, however, who are at the helm of affairs not only did not shirk this duty but in fulfilling it they displayed a zeal, a capacity for work, a business manner with which the moderate and sound opinion of the public will fully credit them.

There is a limit, however, that the state must not go beyond in carrying out its work, moreover it would be overstepping its bounds: it behoves the government, not to so mould the minds of the people that they will be prone to expect everything from the state. In alluding to this conception—which I think only right—of limited state interference, I have no intention to give a warning to the government which I support and in which I have faith. A government which is conservative and gives protection as this one does, can give rise to no fear that it will break the most cherished traditions of its party. What I wish to point out, is the part that, under present conditions, the people themselves have to play in their own sphere.

I referred a moment ago to this law known as social equilibrium. Weighing all the views exchanged in the house on questions which more or less directly relate to the budget, one realizes to what degree of deep perturbation the centre of gravity of the economic structure of the world has shifted. It is that centre of gravity which must be found and set in place. By its displacement, collectivities which abused of their own prosperity, relying on an unbounded optimism, are taught a sharp lesson. Neither have we escaped it. However severe it may be and however short we desire it, it must inevitably be of benefit in the first place to those who have been most affected.

Without this awakening of the conscience of nations to the laws of "the bread earned by the sweat of one's brow", of thrift, justice to all, charity and sacrifices, the most enlightened and best directed governments will remain powerless. In requesting the government, as it is done in certain countries and even among us, since certain members of the extreme left have advocated it, in the house, to check our insolvency by resorting to state measures, would simply mean adding government disorder to social disorder and thus pave the way to anarchy or revolution.

What strikes me most in the midst of the present distress and what seems to me to herald better times, is that we are gradually returning to the path over which our fore-