

Distribution of Goods and Services

For a long time the western provinces could not subsist due to the economic conditions of the wheat market. In the face of all sorts of difficulties, another formula was sought. And, following the Rowell-Sirois inquiry, the equalization payments formula was found, and money was taken from the richer provinces and given to the poorer ones to enable them to provide the same quality of service to their citizens, thus creating equality in Canada. After a few years of this system, one cannot say perhaps that the situation has been corrected but an effort was made to prevent the economic differences from widening between the rich and the poor provinces. However, those differences have not really been eliminated and are still too pronounced.

In the face of such facts—and the Liberal government was not necessarily the first to resort to such an innovation—special programs were sought in order to help underprivileged areas. As early as 1930 what is called in the West the PFRA was created. Then, late in 1950, ARDA and FRED were established. A little later, about 1963, 1964, 1965—I cannot recall the exact dates—an assistance plan was provided for the areas designated as underdeveloped.

When the hon. member for Témiscamingue says that we have set up commissions, this is a strange thing to say in a meeting. Only it is not true because ARDA—though this may be denied in the Lower St. Lawrence region—is more than a commission because an amount of \$250 million has been voted for this single item. Maybe this program was not the one needed but to say that it was merely a commission is not true. ARDA may be considered inadequate and I, for one, think it is.

• (4:20 p.m.)

An agreement was made with Prince Edward Island. The assistance provided to that province will amount to \$250 million. It may not be enough. It may not be the right way. It is a sincere and honest effort. We believe in it. However, no one should tell us that it is a case where a commission will bring down a report. It is not true. It is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, to say things like that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I do like to laugh in the House of Commons, and the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) makes us laugh. However, I do not think that

[Mr. Marchand (Langelier).]

such remarks will contribute to enhance politics. Why should we systematically depreciate what is being done?

I am not in favour of the Progressive Conservatives' policy but I feel that they really did something worthwhile when they instituted professional training programs which promoted the development of vocational schools. I am convinced that they did not go far enough. However this is another problem. But to say that nothing is being done to help anyone, is to repeat exactly the same thing as Mr. Chartrand, and I say that for the benefit of the hon. member for Témiscamingue.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Nothing sounds more like a speech by the hon. member for Témiscamingue, than a speech by Mr. Chartrand. They have the same substance, the same depth.

I feel, Mr. Speaker, that in the field of social security, great progress has been made in the last few years—the opposition party need not praise us for it because we are not here for that. What we do is being done with public funds and there is no need for praise. In my opinion, health insurance is a basic measure.

I fought for health insurance. I believe in it because people who are sick—I have been sick in the past and perhaps it has happened to the hon. member too—and who cannot afford to get medical care, are in a very great distress. We fought to set up health insurance. That does not mean that we should be canonized. It has been done in some provinces—the hon. member who leads the New Democratic party here did it in his own province before it was done here.

It is not a matter for mutual praise. We just have to say that governments, in our country, can make mistakes. They may not go fast enough, they may not go far enough. As for all those who systematically, enjoy—especially at this time when Canada, faces real difficulties, not only from the linguistic and racial viewpoint, but also from the economic viewpoint—making irresponsible speeches, I feel, Mr. Speaker, that they are depreciating politics and doing nothing useful.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): There are people, even in my own party, with whom I fundamentally disagree on ideological grounds. I do not regard them as less honest for that. They try, according to their conception, to