

Government Orders

We do not have the will through either the provincial government, although it promised that all kinds of great things were going to happen in the north, or this government which does not have the resources to provide for all of those communities in northern Ontario and other areas of Canada to spend on the infrastructure that is so vitally needed.

I just heard from my friends on the side here, Mr. Speaker, that they spent a fortune on northern Ontario. Let me say unequivocally and without fear of contradiction that all we have heard in northern Ontario is words and the promises that are made. We get ministers there making all kinds of promises and it has not, like other governments before it, followed through. That is a dilemma that all people in northern Ontario are facing, the dilemma that governments promise things that they cannot deliver. That is what is happening in Ontario, and we see it happening on the other side of the House.

Getting back to the point of my colleague on transportation needs, we need rail transport, additional roads and more access to the air systems of Canada. Thank you very much for asking that question.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak on Bill C-32, although I am not too happy with the consequences of this particular bill.

It allows for the extension of a 5 per cent limit on CAP for the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, the province from which I come. It is a continuation of Bill C-69 which limited the 5 per cent cap until 1992. Bill C-32 extends this until 1995. May I suggest that this is the only mechanism by which the federal government assists in funding social assistance and social services in the provinces.

I want to quote someone here: "And then there is what I call the dimension of tenderness. It is the vital responsibility of government to demonstrate compassion for the needy and assistance for the disadvantaged". "It is the equalization of opportunity for all and an elevated sense of social responsibility that must continue to find favour with every thoughtful Canadian. Of all the challenges of government, no cause is more noble, no obligation more sacred. We shall be judged both as

individuals and as a society by the manner in which we care for those unable to care for themselves".

Our Prime Minister said those words and, as is so often the case, we can agree with his words but we certainly cannot agree with his actions. In fact only 12 per cent of the population in this country would agree with the Prime Minister these days.

The historical perspective has to be pointed out. This dates back to 1867 and the Constitution Act wherein it was decided that there would be an agreement or a pact between the provinces and the federal government to share 50 per cent in social assistance for the provinces.

As the years have progressed, the development of these policies has caused problems between the provinces and the federal government as to constitutional powers. It is suggested: "It is not my responsibility; it is yours" and vice versa. As a result the disadvantaged people of this country, the people who require the assistance, get caught in the middle.

The federal government often says that the municipalities are creatures of the province, but surely it begs that the three levels of government co-operate. One cannot function without the other, and therein is part of the problem. The federal government is no longer participating or is not fulfilling its obligations to the pact which began in 1867.

There is a history of changes where the social assistance system in this country became better and better and improved as years went on.

The Canada Assistance Plan of 1966 broadened the basis of support to those in need of financial assistance, regardless of the cause of that need. It was one of five elements of a program designed to abolish poverty. Obviously it is not working.

Some of the benefits of this program, the transferring of funds from the federal government to the provinces, to the municipalities, goes on and on. Although I do not agree with some of the things the previous speaker indicated, I certainly acknowledge that services are going to be severely cut: the rehabilitation services, including services to the chronically unemployed and to meet the special needs of persons at risk of being socially isolated, particularly the aged and the physically and mentally disabled.