

Costs are mounting daily. They are frightening. The minister should not pass by those people on the other side of the street. They should be given justice. Surely I do not have to remind the minister of the story of the Good Samaritan. Let him make a new resolve, and act.

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to amplify the statement given by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) in reply to a question the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) raised the other day, and again tonight, concerning the institution of insured medical and surgical supplies for old age pensioners and others with low income who are in need.

● (2220)

In the first place, the federal government is not constitutionally in a position to institute such insured health benefits. What the federal government has done in this area is to offer to cost-share in one manner or another provincial programs providing such benefits to those in need. Under the Canada Assistance Plan, enacted by parliament in 1966, federal sharing has been and is available to all provinces, but not all have taken full advantage of its provisions. In fact, one large province with which the hon. member should be very familiar leaves the nature and extent of health-related benefits for persons in need largely to the discretion of local, municipal or regional authorities, with the result that there is great variation in the assistance available from one community to another, and this despite the ready availability of federal sharing to the extent of 50 per cent of the cost. Obviously, the provincial government could correct this situation itself.

Any extension of benefits under our two national health insurance programs would have to be on a universal basis since the acts do not provide for federal sharing of less than universal programs. The introduction at this time of a universal program covering pharmaceuticals and surgical supplies would have major budgetary implications and, quite apart from this, would represent a breach of the federal government's firm commitment that it would not initiate a new major joint program without provincial consensus. The background to this commitment is well known to the House.

To summarize, the provinces have not yet taken full advantage of the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan to provide assistance in the area of pharmaceuticals and surgical supplies to the needy persons mentioned by the hon. member for Simcoe North.

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION—ALLEGED FAILURE OF CORPORATION TO COMPLY WITH LEGISLATION—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, about the only thing I could say that is worth mentioning at this time of night is that at present there are three times as many Tories in the House as there are Grits.

For the past six years I have used every possible vehicle to bring to the attention of the government a situation, namely, that legislation of 1967 has not been adhered to by

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the responsible Crown corporation officials in charge of the Cape Breton Development Corporation. The last question I put in this respect was on September 10, when I asked if there was any reason the president of the Cape Breton Development Corporation should not be held responsible under the Criminal Code in the same way as any railway worker would be who refused to return to work under the legislation which was recently passed by the House.

The fact remains that legislation passed in respect of pensions for dependants of former employees of the Cape Breton Development Corporation and in the coal industry under section 18 (a)(ii) of the act requires that pension arrangements be made, but there is no doubt that these arrangements have never been made. I might say here that two committees of parliament have given unanimous support to this matter. The most recent committee report recommended unanimously as follows:

Your committee supports the position of the Cape Breton miners that the Cape Breton Development Corporation has not acted in the best interest of the said miners in deducting from pensions retirement payments sums of money which were legally forthcoming from federal unemployment insurance programs and the Canada Pension Plan. Further, your committee recommends to the House that a firm decision be taken in favour of the legitimate claims of the Cape Breton miners and recommends to the House of Commons that the government consider the advisability of instructing the Cape Breton Development Corporation to satisfy the said claims.

So far as the Cape Breton Development Corporation is concerned, I have here the situation as it applied up to July 1 of this year and still applies in many cases. This is a quotation from their own policy paper, and it reads as follows:

(a) In the case of a surviving widow of the pensioner, make a single payment to her on the last day of the month in which the pensioner dies and again on the last day of the month following but not thereafter—

This can add up in some cases to a write-off of approximately \$50 by way of an answer to the legislation passed in the House under section 18 (a)(ii) which requires coverage. As of July 1 there have been improvements brought about as a result of the sympathetic approach taken by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson). I give full credit to the minister in this case. But I say here and now there is no denying that Mr. Tom Kent—and this can be found in the submission put before the government as recently as June—is still ignoring the legislation as passed by the House of Commons in June, 1967, section 18(a)(2), requiring that these payments be made to the widows. This is still not being done. There is no denying it.

I do not know how the parliamentary secretary who will answer on behalf of the minister, or how the minister or the government can answer this question. On the first committee there were 12 members from the government side of the House and that committee gave unanimous support to the contention I put before it, as did the petition accepted by Mr. Speaker and the government. The most recent committee also gave unanimous support to my contention.

The evidence that they have not carried out their full commitments under the legislation is to be found in their own writing. If the hon. member who takes the responsi-