

The Budget—Mr. Arsenault

Canadian National Telegraphs give the same rates of pay to employees in the federal telegraph service. Failing that, then I say the federal government must accept the responsibility of taking care of its loyal servants who, in the cases I have mentioned, served for periods ranging between seven and thirty-one years. I am going to ask the government to consider this matter, to see what can be done.

I said I was going to discuss only three points, and I have done so. First of all, something must be done—and done right now—on a federal basis to take care of the employable unemployed. This has been a federal government responsibility since 1945. The government has failed to keep its promises. Our municipalities and provinces are being faced with costs which are rightfully those of the government here in Ottawa. I say the Post Office Department is not being fair to its employees. I suggest that the Postmaster General (Mr. Cote) should take careful note of the advice he is receiving, because I think some of it is very bad. Unfortunately the condition of ill repute must be his responsibility, because it cannot be traced to those whose responsibility it ought to be.

While I have no doubt the information given by the Minister of Transport was given in all sincerity, the fact is that it was incorrect, and he has received bad advice. It has been shown that the offer made to the employees by Canadian National Telegraphs was not as he indicated to the house it would be. I suggest the minister should make an investigation immediately, not just through the officers of Canadian National Telegraphs but through meeting directly with the employees who would not accept the offer because they believed it was so vicious it was not worthy of consideration.

It is time the government tucked in its shirt and pulled up its pants. Instead of making excuses it should get down to facts. If it does I am sure it will realize that there are many things in Canada that need correcting, and the government can make the necessary corrections if it only will.

(Translation):

Mr. Bona Arsenault (Bonaventure): Mr. Speaker, on April 6 the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) made his annual budget speech, in which he stated the financial position of the country and clearly defined the stand taken by the Canadian government with respect to the new personal income tax recently imposed by the government of the province of Quebec.

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On that occasion, the Minister of Finance, who has long since won the admiration and the gratitude of the Canadian people, once more gave proof of the courage he has always shown in the face of difficulties. One must not forget that he too is from Quebec and that his love for his province is just as strong and sincere as that of any of us from Quebec and of any of those who, outside the house, have set themselves up as the defenders of our province.

On April 14, the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Lesage), in one of the most brilliant speeches of his political career, analysed in detail the serious problem which arises in the field of fiscal relations between the federal government and the government of Quebec.

His speech made a deep impression on the intelligent people of the province of Quebec.

Through his ponderation, his high-mindedness, his noble sentiments, the hon. member for Montmagny-L'Islet showed us that it is still possible for citizens of a province to examine and discuss dispassionately, without undue provocation and useless arrogance, a problem common to us all and the importance of which cannot be overemphasized.

The problem of intergovernmental relations between Quebec and Ottawa is of too high a level and its implications are much too important for the future of our province to transform it into a common matter of political partisanship.

We therefore have, as elected representatives of the same province, an opportunity which is perhaps unique in history, of resorting to all the resources of our intelligence to do each our share, no matter how small, for the settlement of a problem the solution of which can only be found in the search for truth, in moderation, in mutual respect and more particularly in the honest and sincere recognition of the rights and duties of each of the parties concerned.

We of the Canadian parliament are the first to recognize the right of the province of Quebec, and of any other province, to direct taxation, because this is the only taxation field which, under the constitution of this country, the provinces share concurrently with the Canadian government.

Section 91, subsection 3, of the confederation act grants to the Canadian government the right to resort to "any mode or system of taxation". This is quite clear.