

claims of these men and to give them their just deserts. It is simply criminal. I am sure there is not a member in this House who has not had personal experience with his constituents, especially the gallant old boys of World War I who are passing on. No amount of retroactivity will do those gallant sons any good.

• (1650)

It was interesting to hear about the minister's incentives. When he was reading about them I quickly looked up one of the policy statements of my party which pretty well contained all of them. So, for that part I liked the speech. As he read further, I concluded he had only read it and had not really determined what he would do with it. He still does not know what he is going to do with it. The provision of incentives can hardly be meaningfully put into effect by a government which month after month displays that it cannot find work for thousands and thousands of Canadian people. So, we get back again to this issue of the general incompetence of the government. I heard the minister say that the government was committed in this field. As one of my colleagues said, they may have the commitment but do they have the competence. This is the question we must ask and which our people must ask.

I think the time has come for us to look very carefully at the question of incentives. I believe a government has an obligation to provide the opportunity for people to work. Some of us Calvinists are often sneered at for what is called the old fashioned work ethic of people several generations ago. But when I look around the world and see country after country competing with Canada in the markets of the world with economic gain I wonder if the work "ethic" is so out of date after all. Nor can I believe that any but a very small group of Canadian people prefer the dole to meaningful work. No society should be placed in a position where government makes it easier and better economically to be on the dole than meaningfully and interestingly employed. These are the kinds of things I believe we must examine. To that part of the minister's speech, I take no exception. I think it is the kind of thing he should think more about and which we should think more about.

I look forward to something which might mean more hope and more confidence. Part of the problem of the government opposite is that it never really sensed the extremity of the problem. It never realized I am sure how much poverty stalked this rich land. The government never looked at what happened to the person who under the system is penalized because he did find work. I received a letter from a man 71 years of age who said he never drew a cent of unemployment insurance in his life because he had always found something to do. However, he said he now is idle and while his neighbour who is 31 years younger has been receiving unemployment insurance every winter he cannot receive a cent because he is over age 70. Is that just a statistic or just a little human tragedy about which we should be concerned?

The minister mentioned the FISP program. I profoundly hope, with his great intellectual capacity and agility, he will not recycle the administrative monstrosity that was before us in the last parliament. I hope he will correct the errors where the need is greatest but that we will not have

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the Canadian people required to abjectedly display their poverty before some emanation of the state. I think we have passed the stage of the rude means test which caused such agony to so many people for so long.

Finally, since I have had one good habit since I came to this House of never exceeding my time limit, I will resume my seat and say in a personal way that I wish the minister well. If all the things he produces will benefit the people of Canada he will find not carping criticism from this side of the House but rather as much thoughtful and helpful discussion as we can give him, because I believe in the field of social welfare there is no ground for partisan infighting and I for one do not intend to indulge in it.

Mr. Elias Nesdoly (Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, might I join with other members of this House in congratulating you on your election to office. I should like also to extend my congratulations to the Deputy Speaker. Needless to say, after stomping through Meadow Lake constituency for several months the atmosphere here is somewhat different and therefore my knees are somewhat shaky. However, as time goes on I believe probably I shall warm up a little bit.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nesdoly: A number of references were made in this House, with a certain amount of derision, to the fact that only 10 per cent of the seats in this House are held by members of the New Democratic Party. I should like to remind members of this House that although we hold perhaps only 10 per cent or 12 per cent of the seats, if we include the Northwest Territories and some of the other far flung constituencies, we represent half of the land area of this great country. I think this is something the members of the Liberal and Conservative parties should note.

For too long a period the members of the old line parties have considered these far flung areas to be nothing but places from which to obtain the raw materials which provide jobs for people in their huge cities. Some reference was made to a socialist ripoff in British Columbia. We have had that ripoff in Saskatchewan for quite a number of years, but the people get right back to it again after experimenting with the other sort of thing. I have had an interesting experience since coming to Ottawa. Back home my telephone bill was something in the order of five dollars and a few cents. In Ottawa, my bill amounts to something over \$6. This is a city which has a dense population in relation to that of Regina and yet the phone bill in Regina is lower. Let us not talk about a Socialist ripoff because I know something about the purposes of public utilities and the Crown corporations. Reference was made to some people going to bed with other people. I can assure hon. members who are concerned about our virtue that we intend to hang on pretty tightly to our pyjamas.

An hon. Member: You will be wanting to sleep with us one of these days, too.

An hon. Member: Never. We do not want to prostitute ourselves.