

The Address—Mr. Michener

Mr. Hanna: If you leave the provincial debt situation out of the picture you will find that they are much worse off. In the last five years the municipal debt of Alberta has just about doubled.

Mr. Shaw: Most of it is self-liquidating.

Mr. Hanna: In my home city of Edmonton, right in the heart of the oil fields, the municipal debt has increased almost three-fold in the last five years.

Mr. Blackmore: Much of it borrowed at 2 per cent from the provincial government.

Mr. Hanna: The hon. member knows that while some of it was borrowed at 2 per cent, the rest was borrowed at 2½ per cent, 3½ per cent or higher. Meanwhile during the past 7½ years the Alberta government has received \$228 million from oil and natural gas alone, but this has helped the municipal taxpayer very little.

It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that if this federal government will pay, in one form or another, its fair share of municipal taxes, other governments whose responsibilities to the municipalities are all the greater may be encouraged, shall we say, to do likewise and pay their fair share to the municipalities for the services they receive.

My home city of Edmonton so far has received nothing under the federal Municipal Grants Act, due to the 4 per cent feature. Still its per capita debt is the highest of all Canada's major cities. I mention this because some hon. members might be interested in knowing that to live in a debt-free province does not necessarily mean that its citizens are free from debt, and the resulting heavy taxation which carrying that debt entails.

Before closing I would like to commend this government for the steps it has already taken to bring about some equalization of freight rates in so far as they affect western Canada. The western provinces, especially Alberta, are at the peak of the freight rate structure of Canada. In the interest of more interprovincial trade and Canadian solidarity it is imperative that further steps be taken to ease the burden of freight rates now bearing down so heavily on western Canada and on Alberta in particular. I trust that the steps already taken to correct this situation are only a foretaste of what is to come in the future.

Mr. Roland Michener (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, I feel impelled to rise because of the opportunity this debate presents to new members for identification and initiation. But constituency identification, like station identification, should not be a long process.

St. Paul's riding is in the downtown commercial centre of Toronto and comprises the main industrial, business and commercial sections of the city and a residential strip running about three miles north from the waterfront with Yonge street as its principal artery. It has no farmers, no lumberjacks and no fishermen as far as I know, except those who may have retired to the urban peace of Toronto or to its pleasures and facilities. However, St. Paul's does comprise a broad and representative cross-section of urban Canadians of all ethnic groups and conditions. It is perhaps a trifle overweighted with members of parliament because I claim as constituents two hon. members of this house and one hon. member of the other place.

Those who work or live in St. Paul's are engaged in a great variety of occupations. I might illustrate this by referring to a few. Legislation is represented by the legislative assembly of the province of Ontario, the seat of government, located in Queen's Park. Education is represented by the University of Toronto with its affiliated colleges having over 10,000 students, as well as a number of other schools. Communications are represented by the newest and only subway system in the country. Medication, if I may use that term, is represented by four great general hospitals. Salvation is represented by two cathedrals, several churches and the headquarters of many other religious denominations. Finally to complete the categorization, temptation is represented by some 85 licensed hotels and premises.

Housing is a principal concern of the constituents of St. Paul's, not because there is room for more houses unless one can make two houses grow where one grew before, to use the words of a colleague who spoke earlier in this debate. There has been a steady supplanting of residential properties by commercial expansion. The head offices of four large life insurance companies are now being built uptown. The construction of the subway cut a swath through some 400 houses and thereby removed living accommodation for some thousands of people.

This encroachment and the steady movement northward has meant that the residents of St. Paul's have had to find new housing in suburban areas and this is a matter of urgent and great concern. I look forward with great interest to the proposal to increase the supply of mortgage money for housing.

There is a prospect of an early supply of natural gas at prices which would make that ideal fuel available for heating purposes on a competitive basis with coal and oil. I look forward to what may be proposed in that regard. The government's proposals for mu-