

Canadian Economy

This multi-billion dollar program should be looked at with a view to the overall social policies of all departments, and co-ordinated with them. The prime consideration must be the most efficient means possible of assisting persons finding themselves jobless, the ways of supporting them most adequately with the co-operation of all agencies involved, and of getting them back into the work force as quickly as possible.

It is becoming increasingly clear to a great many Canadians that a higher priority must be given to the quality of life in our country. Although it is essential for our social well-being that Canada enjoys sufficient economic growth to meet the needs of her people, we must be liberated from the "bigger is better" complex. Bigger is not necessarily better; otherwise why has Canada so many social problems after a generation of material prosperity?

● (2020)

Why are there five million Canadians living below the poverty level? Why have the numbers of crimes of violence increased so drastically? Why do so many people have to resort to alcohol and drugs for escape from reality? Why do they find it necessary to flee from the reality of living in one of the most richly-bestowed and beautiful countries in the world? Our values and opportunities must be emphasized to give greater meaning to life in Canada.

Government policies must reflect the realization that the worth of each Canadian cannot be counted simply in terms of input into the economic system. If, in the past, cities had to give priority to the hardware of municipal services they should now begin to emphasize those which will enable people to fulfil their potential. Our primary task should be to demand policies based on that premise, policies which will enable Canadians to lead lives of dignity, with meaning and responsibility. From infancy to old age, each person should have the opportunity to enjoy the fullness of life. We must hold the belief strongly that there is a need for a system of social justice that maximizes every Canadian's sense of individual initiative and enterprise.

Attention must be given to social development which has for too long been neglected, and it should begin with a clearer understanding of what a truly human and spiritual existence can be. Past indifference to this quality has brought us to the present situation where our populace is besieged by ills of the spirit. We must realize that humanistic and spiritual considerations must become vitally important ones.

Government cannot legislate a meaningful lifestyle, but it can undertake programs designed to foster it. There is an urgent and compelling need to bring order out of the chaos of overlapping and cumbersome programs.

Policies involving senior citizens should be revised in order that they may experience a greater fullness of life. One never outgrows the need to believe in one's self-worth, but the trend in our society has been to demean the aging. Many older people sense that they are losing their identity as persons, and a physical approach to their condition is not enough. More positive efforts are required to help the senior citizen preserve his independent identity.

Social justice must not be mistaken for socialism or for welfarism, because they are altogether different, Mr. Speaker. Let us not think that the socialists have a corner

[Mr. Elzinga.]

on compassion. Indeed, the one thing I have noticed about them is that their compassion bears a marked relationship to their distance from an object and its source of funds and aid. They have great enthusiasm for public money going to foreign countries and for wonderful projects such as Petro-Can, but they have somewhat less enthusiasm for private money going to individual Canadians. They are great at giving out money as long as it is the public's money, but we dare not touch their pockets. My complaint is that those feelings of compassion have been smothered by years of state expansion until Canadians expect the state to do everything, because now it has gotten into everything. We must have a policy which is based on returning the state to its proper function of serving the individual, and not the other way around.

A socialist is one who thinks he knows all the answers. In fact he thinks that he knows what is best for an individual, even better than the individual himself. He strives for complete government domination of the economy and believes that the government should own, or at least control, all productive capital. "Public ownership" he calls it, or "belonging to the people". These are very slick phrases, Mr. Speaker, but let us ask the socialists: do we own Air Canada or the Post Office? Of course we don't. Nobody owns these institutions unless it is cabinet ministers and their bureaucrats who control the money—money which comes from you and me, the taxpayers. It is true welfarism has an immense political advantage and is the best cover-up for basic injustice. It has a built-in defence against criticism. But let us remember a statement made by Lenin.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner (London East)): I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired. He may, however, continue with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Elzinga: I thank hon. members for giving me an opportunity to continue.

Let us remember a statement of Lenin's. He said that the way to destroy the middle class was to crush it between the grindstones of taxation and inflation. And that is just what the government is doing. The inadequacies of many of the proposals put forward by the government make me more and more aware each day that it does not have any positive solutions or policies to solve the problems of this country. Too many of the government's decisions reflect a strong tendency to put that which is expedient ahead of that which is basically sound from the long term point of view. It is time there was restoration of ideals and principles to their rightful place in our national politics.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) has given us again the opportunity to deal with two economic issues which are a grave concern for Canada and the entire world, that is inflation and unemployment.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a few comments on both problems, especially on unemployment