

Suggested Interest-free Loans

do not earmark more than 20 per cent of their annual budget to the payment of the interests on their debts. The noxious fumes of the present economic system are slowly poisoning us and I find it very disturbing.

However, many municipalities in Quebec earmark more than 50 per cent of their annual budget only for the repayment of interest on their debt. Thus, the municipality of Trois-Rivières-Ouest in the St. Maurice region earmarked 57.4 per cent of its budget for the fiscal year 1967-1968 for interest payments on its debt, or about \$62.98 per citizen.

The municipality of Ville d'Anjou earmarked \$3,229,623 in 1968 out of a total budget of \$4,976,081 for the payment of interest on its debt, or 64.9 per cent of its total budget. The Chambly municipality in the Richelieu region allocated 53.6 per cent of its budget during the fiscal year 1967-1968 to the payment of interest on its debt.

What are we to make of such figures, if not to feel that our economic system is completely obsolete and that all we can do now in order to live decently within such a system is to get our children and our children's children into debt.

The older a municipality is, the harder it is for it to balance its budget. Simple logic proves, without the shadow of a doubt, that there is something really wrong with our economy. Why persist in increasing taxes, reducing expenses, getting into debt with neighbouring countries, while in reality we are only putting band-aids on a wooden leg. Why not solve the problem at the source, and change the system?

I have only quoted a few figures concerning the municipalities, but we all know that the same goes in every field in the public sector, and that it is much more so in the private sector. Indeed, the situation is the same with regard to the budgets of school boards, community centres, the provinces as well as the Canadian government. Must we wait till the nation goes bankrupt to finally wake up? Unfortunately, I am afraid so, Mr. Speaker.

Another problem, that is ever growing, and which, unless it is solved in the near future, will cause us much trouble, is that of air and water pollution.

At the present time, our rivers, our lakes, are filled with waste to the extent where government authorities have had to forbid commercial fishing because the fish has become unfit for consumption.

I have sat for two years on the National Resources and Public Works Committee, and

I am convinced that the present situation urgently requires the attention of the central government. Last Wednesday, I attended with my colleagues of the committee the showing of a few short films on the quality of our waters in various parts of the country. Things are far from rosy, even though the films were in colour. We talk of saving the lives of our fish, but what about the lives of human beings, of Canadians!

In several municipalities, tap water is no longer drinkable. Many doctors have forbidden their patients to drink the water in some Quebec municipalities, on the other side of the Ottawa river, for instance, where cases of typhoid and paratyphoid fever have been recorded.

Meanwhile, the municipal councils are doing nothing and they cannot do anything because they do not have enough funds to purify the water, to filter it so that people may safely drink it. These are very serious problems since the health of the people is at stake as well as our industrial development.

It is time that the federal government should develop some kind of machinery for regulating financial participation in order to help the municipalities together with the administrations of the various provinces.

We should try to devise financing methods more rational and more just than those we have now if we do not want to run the risk of entirely destroying private ownership and if we do not want to jeopardize house ownership as a result of high taxes.

Municipalities as well as industrial organizations are facing financing problems when they try to fight water pollution in an efficient way. Provided it is willing to take the necessary steps, the federal government is in a position to solve these financial problems.

That is why the Ralliement créditiste has raised today this question and is asking the federal government, through the Bank of Canada, to grant interest-free loans to the provinces and to the municipalities in order to build and develop social projects which are a vital necessity if the community is to survive.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, we must admit that the members of the Ralliement créditiste who spoke before me, seem convinced and sincere, but we must also admit that they are not very convincing. In fact, accord-