

The Address—Mr. Carter

I agree with the concept put forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) in 1968 in a speech he made, I believe, in Windsor. At that time he pointed out the need for regional land banks and the establishment of a revolving fund out of which we would buy land in advance of development and later sell it to developers with the understanding that a reasonable price would be charged the purchasers of homes. It is quite obvious to all of us that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but I must remind him that his allotted time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Does the House agree that the hon. member may complete his remarks?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Carter: Thank you, sir, and hon. members for allowing me to continue. I hope that what I have to say will justify the tolerance I have been shown.

Getting back to housing, I recommend that we abolish the sales tax and give some form of tax relief on mortgage interest payments. I recommend the establishment of a land bank financed by a revolving fund. I feel, too, that we should give some thought to amending the National Housing Act so that housing authorities, municipal, provincial or what have you, would be able to purchase existing houses for subsidized rental. I cite an example in my city where the three levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal, embarked upon a program of building subsidized rental housing. The cost of these homes in the final analysis exceeded \$20,000 per unit.

In every city in Canada—and I speak with some authority of the city of St. John's, Newfoundland—there are probably hundreds of homes for sale at prices that range from \$8,000 to \$15,000. These houses probably still have 25 or 30 years of life. They could be purchased by a housing authority for a sum much less than the cost of building subsidized rental housing of the type that we have. These houses could then be rented to people in the middle and low-income bracket in the same way as rental houses under a subsidized rental plan. I feel this could work.

While I am talking about housing and the need for subsidized rentals for people suffering hardship because they are at the bottom half of the income ladder, let me make a few remarks about social assistance and welfare in this country. I do not think I am saying anything that has not been said before when I say that this country will never achieve its potential prosperity or high level of economic maturity as long as a major segment of our population remains non-productive. When you consider that 20 per cent of any population, whether it be in the province of Newfoundland, Ontario, Manitoba or indeed any part of Canada or the world, is forced by economic

circumstances and legislative restrictions to live off the fat of an already flabby economy, you realize that society is indeed in trouble.

I suppose my province is no different from most provinces of Canada. It is a little worse off, yet no less proud or desirous of retaining independence. But because of lack of opportunity and restrictions in legislation governing social and welfare assistance, many of our people have been sentenced to a non-productive and demoralizing existence—through no fault of their own and without even having committed a crime. In my opinion it is imperative that we take a long hard look at the Canada Assistance Plan. The formula proposed last year by the Atlantic provinces for improved cost-sharing arrangements and the plan to make more federal funds available appear to warrant urgent and careful consideration by this government. This concept strikes at the very root of federal-provincial fiscal and monetary arrangements as they affect the slow-growth areas of our country.

This is one area in which a national formula, as far as I am concerned, is not the answer. Neither is it rational to have the same precise, rigid form of legislation which governs areas such as those covered by the Canada Assistance Plan applying equally to each province. For example, Newfoundland might disagree with some of the provisions of the act in so far as they restrict our province from developing programs which are tailored to our unique needs. We would still want to avail ourselves of the federal contributions available under the social assistance plan.

● (5:30 p.m.)

People on welfare, whether they live in St. John's, Newfoundland, Alberta, Halifax or New Brunswick have but one burning desire. I am not prepared to accept the theory that people on welfare enjoy welfare. They do not want to stay on welfare. Neither is it true that most of them think they have found their niche in life and are happy to stay in it. I do not accept that theory because I know it is not true. It may be true for a very small minority, but the majority of people on welfare have been forced to accept welfare as a result of circumstances over which they have no control. They do not like it any more than we would like it.

These unfortunate people are asking for a place in life where they will not be discarded or cast-offs because through no fault of their own they contribute little to the productivity of our country; and by the same token, we contribute little to them. Surely, Mr. Speaker, there must be some way in which the province, the nation and the individual can contribute one to another. At the moment this government seems less than willing to talk about amending the Canada Assistance Plan in a way which would allow the provinces the power of discretion and to renegotiate the terms and conditions of the plan as well as the limitations it now imposes upon them.

There are many areas of this country where resources and public service needs lend themselves to wiser utilization of the federal and provincial funds now made available through welfare. In many parts of Canada welfare

[Mr. Carter.]