

Economic Conditions in Rural Communities

people out of the misery into which they had been for some years.

It must also be said that the principle of selectivity was chosen over that of universality because 20 per cent of the people earn only \$4,500 per year or less, and that 640,000 Canadian families, out of 3 million, include children under 16. This means paying allowances to 1,560,000 recipients who will profit, up to a certain point, by family allowances, which means 50 per cent of the 3,000,000 Canadian families.

Needless to say that this is a very fortunate redistribution and a formula for the 70s that no government could object to.

• (8:50 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, the government is often accused of sins it has not committed but which could well have been committed by the provinces mainly as regards social security which is constitutionally under their jurisdiction.

But had it not been for the federal government, I wonder what our social security programs would be today. It is always the federal government because of its concern about our citizens which initiated these programs.

And today I wonder, mainly as regards social assistance for which the government gives the provinces 50 per cent of what they have to pay to recipients, if fewer sins would be laid at our door if the administration of social security were assured by the federal government rather than by the provinces.

There is no need for figures. It is enough to take a walk through Ottawa and Hull to find that the people on welfare do not even know that the federal government is paying 50 per cent of the money they are getting, and that poor management by certain provinces is to blame for the fact that people on welfare cannot live decently.

During federal-provincial conferences, it has been suggested that these responsibilities should be given back to the provinces. Perhaps this is true but we should be careful and see to it that the provincial programs have the same objectives as the federal programs.

The federal programs generally follow the individuals wherever they go. Everyone knows what provincial programs are. For instance, as regards health insurance plans in force in the provinces, if a recipient leaves his province for three months, he is covered for three months by the other province, but after three months, he must pay taxes. Should he become ill and have nobody to care for him, no hospital will be able to look after him. He will receive extraordinarily high bills, because he will not be covered any more.

Federal programs keep up with the individual while provincial programs expire at the end of the period of time set by each province.

It is true that the lot of the underprivileged in Canada is an unfortunate one and that we should do more for them, but it is wrong to say that we should give \$150 to everyone 65 and over. It would merely be a piecemeal solution.

[Mr. Isabelle.]

Mention was also made of a guaranteed annual income. That would probably be the ideal solution but the society in which we live is not an ideal one, far from it. One has but to listen to the opposition members to know that we are far from an ideal society.

Such piecemeal solutions may make headlines in newspapers but are absolutely worthless in practice, for the Canadian citizens will be the ones to be taxed again, in order to refill the treasury and to redistribute that money to the ones who need it. But the levying of taxes must stop somewhere. Now with its intelligent policy, the government meant to provide better redistribution of tax revenue.

I do not think that quibbling and insults will help us to do anything. I always thought that a frank and open discussion could bring tangible results, not tales like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I cannot see what good it does to tell people in high government places that they have failed to keep their promises and to accuse them also of a host of other misdeeds.

Be it understood that on this earth, no man is perfect, and even less any government, since it is comprised of men. However, one cannot say that governments deliberately fail to do their duty. They do their best with the means available to them. I need not look long for examples. Not so long ago, we had a non-Liberal government, with a sweeping majority in the House, and it was defeated four or five years later. How can this be explained? Were there too many bright people together? Did high voltage cause the instrument panel to explode? It is probably so.

In their pride, did the members all cover the same post? Perhaps. Anyway, there are no perfect men: there are only ambitious men, especially in politics. In fact, it would seem that everybody here is born a prime minister.

I believe that our Prime Minister is extremely clever and gifted. I do not speak those words to praise him; the truth is that everybody, including the press, throughout Canada says so. He does his best, but he is human and so are the members of his cabinet. The federal government is the best government organization in all Canada.

My hon. friends might say that politics has become a career. In politics, you cannot make a career, you cannot become a politician, you can only play petty politics and you can do it by resorting to arguments you heard from the other side of the House.

You become a petty politician because you have the ambition to make politics your profession. They are sincere politicians, but not unlike seasons, they fade away. Whoever makes politics his profession loses his credibility with Canadians. Those who have been here for too long are not listening to their constituents any more. They have become the professionals of politics. They talk about all sorts of things, about Viet Nam or some other remote country, all things which, even though they should get some degree of attention in the House, are none of its everyday concern.

We know that we have an unemployment problem on our back. In March of 1970, there were approximately