

The Address—Mr. Thompson

plish what we should in the realm of trade; because it is only through the trading of goods which we have for export that we will meet our international obligations.

I believe this is very important. In this regard we must develop the programs of ARDA. Farm improvement, housing renewal and building up the run-down areas of the country, the building of our schools, hospitals, harbours, our roads—all these things could be financed if we were to make use of our own assets and credit through the proper use of the Bank of Canada.

● (9:40 p.m.)

We have heard a great deal said about welfare today. It is essential that we take care of our welfare needs; but right now we have welfare running out of our ears. I think in this regard it is important that we take a long, hard look at welfare and our obligations in the realm of welfare to make sure we can properly meet the costs which are involved. It is easy to say yes, we can afford it; of course we can. As long as our hospitals train young people to give the services necessary in the health field, we can afford it. But how will it be achieved? What will be the machinery?

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is essential to set up areas of priority. I know as a parent that my responsibility to my children, I believe, is first of all in the field of education. Second, it is essential that we make sure our children are cared for in the eventuality of sickness. Third, we have the responsibility to provide pensions which will take care of those unable to work and for those of us who are past the age of opportunity of being able to earn our own living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to interrupt the hon. member whose time has expired, unless he has unanimous consent to continue beyond his allotted time.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; I am grateful for this permission.

May I say that I think it was a good thing for the government to say it will consult with the provincial governments, because the responsibility of setting up any health plan first rests with them. They must determine the areas of priority as far as our welfare needs are concerned.

The Economic Council of Canada has much to say about this in its first report. I agree with the report when it says that we must fill in the gaps which remain at the present time before we project ourselves into new

fields. Therefore, in this first responsibility we should carefully define in their proper order of priority the areas for which we will have responsibility. Then I feel that the next step should be to set out the complex problems, such as costs, deciding on priorities, and caring for those who are entirely omitted by the Canada pension plan. This must be worked out through continuing consultation with each other in order to find the correct answer.

We have heard much talk about an amendment to the constitution in order to repatriate it, and it must be repatriated. But we must remember that we in this confederation in Canada first came together as a group of provinces, and there is no body more qualified than the provincial governments to have the first say as to what the amending formula or any changes in the constitution must be. To deprive those provinces of any share in making this decision is to knock one's head against a stone wall, because such a suggestion will not be acceptable. Ten premiers and ten attorneys general, after spending a great many months and weeks in determining what would be the highest common denominator of agreement as far as making a formula for amending the constitution is concerned, could not all have been mistaken. While we in this house are representative of the national needs and realize the need for a strong national government, we must understand that unless we come to agreement with the provinces we can never repatriate the constitution, let alone bring in the changes which may be necessary, or write a new one.

Third in the order of priority I think there must be provision made for the integration of our private pension plans with the Canada pension plan. We must also provide for the portability of private plans which are now in existence. It is not a question of just working on the basis of one year or two years or five years; we must project all of this into the future and step by step move forward to attain those goals which we know are right. Otherwise we will continue to talk about those goals but will not be providing the means or the method of reaching them. It is like attempting to reach the top of a high wall with one jump; it cannot be done. Put a ladder against it and step by step you get there.

I believe that in the speech from the throne there is a great and tragic gap left in the government's program, represented by what was not said. In this world today a battle is raging for the hearts and minds of men.