

The Budget—Mr. Blair

is best in the new concepts of urban living, including the creation of satellite towns and the reassessment of the concept of the green-belt for the use and benefit of all people in the region.

A most essential part of the planning and development in which the federal government must become involved is that of urban transportation. The lack of a fully integrated urban transportation system in the suburbs which I represent is not only a great inconvenience to the people living there but a positive hindrance to their life and livelihood. Recently, a lady living in one of the suburban developments in my constituency was disqualified by the local office of the Unemployment Insurance Commission because her area of work was said to be restricted through lack of proper transportation to the area where there were reasonable opportunities for her to obtain employment. This is a condition which should not and must not prevail.

The solution to the urban and suburban transportation problem in the metropolitan Ottawa area is one which is beyond the present capacity of local municipalities. It can only be undertaken with strong leadership and financial support by senior governments. All of us here recognize that a solution to the problems of urban transportation provides one of the greatest challenges of our time. This government has committed itself to make a positive contribution to this solution, including among other things the institution of pilot projects. There is no place where this solution can be attempted to greater effect, and no place which would benefit more from such a pilot project than the metropolitan Ottawa area, which is within constant view of the federal government.

On other occasions, I intend to speak about the concerns of people living in my constituency, and particularly the public servants who constitute a large part of the population of suburban Ottawa. By the nature of their employment they are denied the same voice in public affairs which is the privilege of other citizens. This is the more so in relation to the activities and decisions of the federal government, which is their employer. The position of the public servant is one of great importance to all of us, and we who are members in this house bear a special responsibility, if not a trust, to protect the special interests of the public service.

In my view, the position of one important group requires special comment tonight and early attention by this parliament. I speak of the retired public servants.

[Mr. Blair.]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):
Hear, hear.

Mr. Blair: As a result of inflation, many retired civil servants have been deprived of dignity and security in old age, which they believed would be theirs during all their years of service to the public. In terms of simple justice and equity, the case of retired public servants cries out for relief, and that relief in my judgment should come immediately. Most hon. members will know that the joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons studying the public service of Canada made the following recommendation in its final report on May 8, 1967:

The government should do what it reasonably can to protect and preserve, or failing that, to restore in some measure the original purchasing power of the contributory pensions which, under the Public Service Superannuation Act, and similar enactments, it has provided for its retired employees.

The conditions, the house will realize, which existed when this report was made almost a year and a half ago have worsened from the standpoint of retired civil servants. Although I appreciate all the claims and stringencies which press on the government at this time, I believe that the highest priority should be given to the implementation of this recommendation of the joint committee, and that consideration of the relief of public servants should be undertaken with the least possible delay.

• (9:30 p.m.)

In my opinion, the future of this country and of my constituency cannot be adequately realized without greater effort in thinking and planning than we have seen heretofore. The industrial towns along the St. Lawrence have not experienced growth and development comparable to that which has occurred in the greater metropolitan centres of this province. Their development has been retarded, notwithstanding the fact that they are located along the St. Lawrence seaway and connected by rail and highway with all the main centres of this province of Ontario. They are progressive communities, well developed and able to absorb new industrial activity and larger populations. While not experiencing the great boom and prosperity of other centres, they are by no means depressed; and it is my view that communities such as these—and they are found in every part of this country—should become a special concern of this parliament.