

Government Orders

our other institutions, and we must preserve it. It is not a question of "should we", it is a question of "we must". Anything less is unacceptable.

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, as we resume debate on this bill today, I just want to reiterate a little bit of history here. It was back in 1966 when this bill was introduced into the House. As a matter of fact, on April 4, 1966, the Hon. Allan J. MacEachen, who was then Minister of National Health and Welfare, rose in his place in this House and stated that he was moving:

That the House go into committee at the next sitting to consider the following resolution which has been recommended to the House by His Excellency.

It went on to outline in that resolution the things that were going to be covered by the bill that would follow. The resolution stated:

It is expedient to introduce a measure to be known as the Canada Assistance Plan to establish a program for sharing with the provinces in the cost of assistance, including health care and welfare services provided to or in respect of persons in need, including mothers and children, older persons, disabled persons and unemployed persons who are in need, and in the cost of developing and improving assistance in welfare services programs, including child and youth welfare programs throughout Canada.

At this stage I would just like to comment that these provisions were necessary because after coming out of the Depression of the 1930s, it was clearly visible in anybody's mind that the provinces could not afford all these social services that were required by the residents of their individual provinces. This was another way during the Pearson administration in 1966 that the government of the day provided for assistance to those provinces to help them out in the tremendous costs that they had to bear in these fields.

The bill also stated and I quote:

— provided for the making of arrangements for extending provincial welfare programs with the approval of Indian bands to Indians with reserve status and for the making of payments to the provinces with respect to the cost of so extending those programs, to provide for the making of payments to the provinces with respect to the cost of specialized projects for assisting and rehabilitating persons in need or likely to become persons in need who have unusual difficulty in

obtaining or holding employment, to provide for amendments to the Old Age Assistance Act, the Blind Persons Act, the Disabled Persons Act and the Unemployment Assistance Act, that are incidental to or consequential on the introduction of the Canada Assistance Plan, and to provide further for the extension of the Established Programs (Interim Arrangements) Act to the Canada Assistance Plan.

The reason why I listed those was simply to put right up front the importance of this legislation that is before the House today. If the federal government is going to move away from that kind of support to the provinces of Canada then with the pressures that are on all levels of government today, which is unfortunately sifting right down to tremendous pressure on municipal governments across the country in terms of social programs, I think it is incumbent upon the federal government to keep faith with the provinces in this country.

• (1250)

My hon. friend from Broadview—Greenwood today got into some economics of what people can afford. People who are employed will provide funds to help finance things such as the Canada Assistance Plan. In this legislation the three provinces that are affected very negatively financially are Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta.

I had a constituent, a businessman, tell me he had been to Toronto recently. He had not been there for some time. He took the usual route from Toronto to Oshawa and on down 401. He said that he could not get over the number of empty office buildings, the number of empty office spaces, the number of empty manufacturing plants in that 40-mile space from Toronto to Oshawa. This tells a story in itself and relates directly to what we are talking about here today.

Ontario has always been looked to in past years to finance at least 40 per cent of the cost of social programs right across the entire country. It is obvious that today Ontario has serious economic problems. Many noted in the press last week that 469,000 jobs have been lost in Ontario. That means those people are not paying income tax to the extent they would normally.