

*The Budget—Mr. Poulin*

When the cost of living is as high as it is today, surely an amount of between \$210 and \$246 in the case of children under 16 and of \$400 in the case of those over 16 is insufficient to support a child decently during a whole year.

I may say, from personal experience, that each child costs hundreds of dollars more than the amounts I just mentioned. So that parents who have enough generosity left to face their moral and family obligations, not only have to bear the heavy burden of tremendous sacrifices, very often unknown to the public at large, but it is also their sorry lot to have their generosity taxed, as they have to pay taxes on a more or less considerable part of their income earmarked for the maintenance and education of their children.

There is another class of citizen to whom the last budget will bring no direct relief and who will again remain the forever forgotten ones; I mean the vast category of consumers who do not buy cars, who neither have shares nor stocks in the large corporations, nor even the means to pay a little income tax. They only have the very costly obligation to pay the general sales tax on a number of commodities they need to buy. It is precisely on their behalf that, in my remarks of March 22, I asked for a reduction of the sales tax. I sincerely believe that it would have been the only way for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Harris) to bring them some relief. And I want to stress this negative aspect of the budget. I can easily imagine what the answer to my suggestions and representations will be—if they are deemed worthy of an answer. I will be told that the government would have to face a still greater deficit than the one expected.

Personally, I believe that an increase of \$50 million in the deficit would have helped the revival of business, providing, of course, greater relief had been given in this operation to the mass of consumers so as to increase their purchasing power.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to say a word or two on a problem of the utmost importance to the farmers, the settlers and the workers, the lumberjacks of Beauce county in particular and of the whole province of Quebec. And I am referring to the price paid to settlers and farmers for the wood they sell to pulp and paper companies.

I congratulate the hon. member for Gatineau (Mr. Leduc) who laid the problem

[Mr. Poulin.]

before this house and the people of Canada. For my part, I have received from the Quebec south shore section of the Catholic farmers' union a recommendation in which I was asked to urge the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) to extend this investigation to the Beauce district. I considered it my duty to comply with the request of that professional organization and I conveyed that recommendation to the proper authority, adding my personal views on the matter. You will understand that it is all that I can say at this stage. It is particularly gratifying for me to bring my humble contribution to the study of that problem, because I may say without bragging that I know it quite well and I could mention the names of hundreds of citizens of my constituency who, especially during certain periods, were the victims of this intolerable situation.

We should be very careful, though, not to attack the small middleman, the dealer who annually buys a few hundred cords of wood to resell at a profit which is often ridiculously small, at the risk of losses which I would not like to assume myself.

Like the producer, he is subjected to the rule according to which might is right. It is not here that the root of the evil must be sought. The scandal will be found higher up.

On the other hand, though, we should be very careful not to confuse the issue, intentionally or otherwise. We should not attempt to assess responsibilities before the investigation is concluded.

One wonders if certain powerful interests, conscious of their guilt and fearful of being caught, are not attempting to confuse public opinion on this issue through dilatory tactics of all kinds so as to make it reticent, nervous, blind, and possibly prejudiced. In this way the work necessary to a comprehensive and objective investigation would be diverted along the wrong channels or, at least, rendered far more difficult.

For my part, Mr. Speaker, I have full confidence in the royal commission which the federal government will set up, and I wish to set the minds of the members of the Catholic farmers' union and those of every farmer and settler in my riding at rest. I have every reason to believe that this investigation will be a serious one, will bring justice to all, will show the cause of the evils and let the responsibility in that respect fall where it must. If it failed in its task something else would have to be done.