

Increased Cost of Living

The suggestion in this amendment that the government is less aware of these responsibilities of the state, and less concerned to promote them, than the members of the N.D.P. is just one of the myths created by that party and assiduously promoted by it from time to time. But we have to do more than this. This must be one of our main objectives as a government and as a people, but we must ensure that proper policies are developed and a proper environment created so that the vast energies of the country can be fully and effectively utilized to increase rapidly our real wealth, our real production, our national productivity. We would not be satisfied with redistributing poverty; we want to abolish it by increasing our real wealth and make sure that this increase in wealth is shared by all.

To accomplish this, we must ensure that our economy retains economic stability, and resources are not lost through unnecessary unemployment. This is a proper function of broad government economic and financial policy, one at which we have been working hard and, I believe, successfully during the past few years. There has never been in the history of this country a period of such steady and rapid economic expansion as we have seen since this government took office.

We must also ensure that our productivity improves, to give us better living standards and allow us to participate in the world economic scene competitively. Here also there is a whole series of programs which government, business, labour and others in the community can, and are, working hard to achieve.

My third criticism of the amendment is that it ignores the very remarkable strides made in this country in recent years in sharing fairly and equitably the record gains in production that we have managed to achieve. This we have done through our taxation system, on the one hand drawing resources from those able to afford them and, on the other hand, through our transfers to individuals and to other levels of government.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Let me mention but a few of our accomplishments in recent years: old age pensions have been increased; the eligible age has been lowered and the guaranteed income supplement for the old people that will shortly be before the house will add substantially to the income of those who need it most. A contributory pension plan is now in operation. Youth allowances for students have been introduced, as have interest-free loans to students. A comprehensive Canada "assistance" plan has been

passed by this house to take care of the disabled, the widowed and the orphaned. Transfer payments from the federal government to individuals have increased from \$2,133 million in 1963 to an annual rate of \$2,424 million in the first half of 1966.

At the same time we have increased our transfer payments to the provinces and their municipalities, to allow them to carry out programs designed to provide equitable distribution of our income gains, and to provide the basis for higher productivity. From 1963 to the first half of 1966, these transfers increased from \$1,715 million to \$2,388 million. These latter figures do not include the very large transfers we shall be making to the provinces with respect to education, and with respect to a more broadly based equalization formula. These transfers will ensure that the poorer provinces have a better opportunity to provide an adequate level of public services to the citizens, without imposing an intolerable level of taxation.

Mr. Speaker, there is more to be done by government to effect a more equitable distribution of income. There is more that could be done by trade unions in organizing the unorganized groups of workers. There is more to be done by industrialists and by employers. But already much has been done, and therefore, I submit that this motion should be rejected.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, as so often happens in debates, sometimes when one hears speakers of different calibre and kind, one forgets what the motion is. I might review just the motion which is now before the house as presented by the leader of the New Democratic Party:

That all the words after the word "that" be struck out and that the following words be substituted therefor:

Since the income of wage and salary earners has remained approximately the same and farm income has fallen as a proportion of the total national income over a period of years, the house regrets the failure of the government to introduce policies designed to produce an equitable distribution of rising productivity and national income among all groups in Canada, particularly in view of the rising cost of living.

I should like to say at the outset that no matter where you stand in respect of political philosophy or where you sit in this House of Commons, you can support this motion to some extent. I never have recognized the philosophical difference some people seem to be able to recognize; that is, that a right