

Guaranteed Income

and encouraged to do so and those who are unable to do so for one reason or another that is justified, will be adequately taken care of in a proper and effective way.

I should like to turn to one other area for a moment and that is to consider the kinds of things we have done as a consequence of the review in the last year. I do not believe that there has ever been a period in the parliament of this country in which any government has done so much in social security policy as has been done in the last year by the present Minister of National Health and Welfare.

One just has to look at that record to see how very impressive it is. I have talked about old age security, guaranteed income and the escalation of these. That is a very substantial program which has helped a great number of senior citizens. We can look also at family allowances which have been substantially increased and have had an enormous impact on young families bringing up children in this country. These allowances are also escalated on an annual basis to meet the cost of living. The Canada Pension Plan has also been escalated to meet the cost of living. The levels have been changed and further legislation is coming forward with respect to that in the near future.

I see the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) in the House. He has done a great job in changing the rates of veterans allowances and escalating payments to veterans in this country who served us so well in two world wars.

Pensions for civil servants and others have been escalated according to the real cost of living and the rates have been changed. That is a substantial step forward and an example to other levels of government that perhaps need an incentive.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) spoke about income tax, and I agree with her that this is a very important question but look what has happened in the last year and a half. Income tax deductions for children have been escalated according to the cost of living and this year the exemptions have been increased to reflect that differential. That is an important step forward. In the budget brought forward in February of last year, everybody in this country enjoyed a substantial decrease in the amount of income tax payable through a reduction in rates. Those in the lower income level benefitted very substantially in comparison to those on higher incomes and that is important as a social principle.

I would simply say in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that hon. members should look carefully at the action we have taken as a government in relation to inflation in this country. Considering the measures brought in to offset the effects of inflation which is largely international and partly domestic, it must be concluded that we have done a great deal—indeed, more than any other country in the world. The policies we have brought forward must surely demand the respect and support of all hon. members today as they did when they were brought forward in this House and supported by them.

It may be said that there is more to be done and that is what the minister has been saying since he took office and what his predecessors said. There is always a lot to be done but this government is committed to doing more than

[Mr. Cafik.]

talking about it; it is committed to implementing policies and programs which will better serve the people of this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Marie Boisvert (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, it can be said that successive Liberal cabinet ministers are not more of the same. As to the last one, because he may have gone a little too far, he was sent to the Department of Labour.

This contradictory attitude at this time bears witness to the inconsistencies of this Liberal federal administration.

In fact, the then Minister of National Health and Welfare who is now Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) made the following statement in his 1970 White Paper, and I quote:

This section provides the main thrust of the government's proposed policy for the coming years, which include:

First, the development of the guaranteed income technique—

He was all for it. How lucky Canadians were in those days!

—as a major anti-poverty policy.

● (1650)

Considering that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) has stated his opposition to a guaranteed minimum annual income, this constitutes a glaring contradiction of his predecessor's policy. Indeed, in the Ottawa newspaper *Le Droit* of November 21, 1973, one can read and I quote:

LALONDE AGAINST A GUARANTEED INCOME

The federal Minister of Health and Welfare, Mr. Marc Lalonde, is against the principle of a guaranteed income. In his opinion, a guaranteed income program will enable Canadians to choose between work and leisure and such a situation will not fit in with the system of values of the great majority of Canadians. Mr. Lalonde, who was talking Tuesday in Montreal to the Association canadienne d'études fiscales, has pointed out on the other hand that one of the great challenges to those responsible for the Canadian social security was the task of finding new employment opportunities for the unemployed.

This is not new. We have been hearing that song for 50 years.

It is also important, he added, to find a way to increase the incomes of those whose salary is below a decent minimum level.

Finally, we must, according to him, find the means to set up new programs without causing social, financial or economical disruption.

There is nothing to fear on that account. I think a lot of water will flow under the bridge before the Minister of National Health and Welfare causes social disruption.

In Drummondville, there are many welfare recipients and unemployed. It is true that there were always two ministers in that constituency, and you will notice that the ones we have now are not most reliable. Therefore, in my Drummondville office, I have the opportunity to meet welfare recipients and unemployed every weekend. I wish to point out here another inconsistency. This is not a criticism, but the minister represents one of the wealthiest constituencies in Canada, that of Outremont. I do not think he often sees welfare recipients. I believe there is something wrong here, I cannot see how a man who is unaware of this problem and who represents one of the wealthiest constituencies in Canada can look after underprivileged people. At all events, he must be much less sensitized to the problem. He may claim perhaps that he