

Distribution of Goods and Services

Let me now read to you from the Economic Council report which states in part:

We believe that serious poverty should be eliminated in Canada, and that this should be designated as a major national goal. We believe this for two reasons. The first is that one of the wealthiest societies in world history, if it also aspires to be a just society, cannot avoid setting itself such a goal. Secondly, poverty is costly. Its most grievous costs are those felt directly by the poor themselves, but it also imposes very large costs on the rest of society.

These include the costs of crime, disease, and poor education. They include the costs of low productivity and lost output, of controlling the social tensions and unrest associated with gross inequality, and of that part of total welfare expenditure which is essentially a palliative made necessary by the failure to find more fundamental solutions. It has been estimated in the United States that one poor man can cost the public purse as much as \$140,000 between the ages of 17 and 57.

No matter how much the government wants to cut back on services, it is not going to cut back on the cost of police and other services necessary to deal with situations resulting from poverty. The government will then find itself dealing with a number of situations instead of one. It will have to take part in providing solutions to those problems resulting from poverty. In order that we can bring up our citizens in the proper way, the government will have to use its money to keep them in health and security.

This is the situation we face. Just what has this government done during this session to alleviate it? I suggest that this government has a poor record with regard to the poverty situation. Earlier in the session the government announced it was going to do something to raise the basic old age pension. We have now had a 2 per cent increase in the form of an allowed statutory increase, but at the same time the cost of living increased by 4 per cent. As a result, the gap has widened.

We were told by this government there would be no increase in veterans' pensions. Again, the gap was widened. The cost of living went up but pensions remained the same. We have been given a number of reasons for the failure to raise pensions. The government, in fact, has not told us directly they cannot be raised but has told us that this situation has been under active, earnest and serious consideration. This government has given us every excuse in the book.

We have considered legislation on various subjects, but none of it has contained provision for alleviation of the housing situation or for urban redevelopment. Perhaps such legislation will be forthcoming, but it is not before us yet. This government has not offered any

[Mrs. MacInnis.]

solution in respect of these situations. It has not given any encouragement to the belief that it will be taking measures in respect of low rental developments and urban development. Is this government afraid to do so? I hope it will bring in measures to do something for this element of our society. These people cannot exist without public housing. This country must be concerned about the lack of housing, just as we, individually, should be concerned.

What is the answer to this soaring cost of living? We were told the other day that the government is setting up another commission to study the cost of living, prices and income. The ledger is completely blank in respect of action on the part of the government along these lines. The government has done nothing in respect of training these people, such as the man to whom I referred who is now 38. Perhaps he cannot be retrained because he is not capable of taking courses. The government has turned a deaf ear to the requests of such people who live in the areas from the maritime provinces to Vancouver.

The only measures the government has taken have been directed to an area so small that they really have had little effect. There is no accommodation in large cities for these people. This is a very black picture. I wish it could be better. We have heard about some accomplishments along these lines as a result of government action, but we know of none in respect of the needs of those people who live in poverty or in that layer just above it. If we do nothing for this latter group, they will very shortly fall into the poverty group and the conditions under which they are now living will worsen.

It is all very well to say we do not have the money to do these things. We are being told all along the line that something will be done. We anxiously await the fulfilment of these promises, but we know very well that the government will again tell us it is not able to provide measures necessary to deal with poverty. The government, on the other hand, has indicated it can afford to combat the cost of living and the increase in the cost of housing. It apparently intends to deal with many other things of this nature.

If war broke out tomorrow we would see the same thing happen as happened when World War II broke out. Many factories would be converted to the production of war materials. After the outbreak of World War II factories were opened to cope with the tremendous need for uniforms, equipment,