

• (9:20 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy LeBlanc (Rimouski):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad of this opportunity to express my opinion on as serious and important a matter as that of poverty—which could be eliminated through the establishment of a social and economic system, as was suggested by the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) in the motion under discussion. However, it seems to me that blaming the government for failing to propose legislation establishing a system designed to fight poverty is an exaggeration and is far from the truth.

Unfortunately, we in Canada keep considering the problem of poverty in different ways. We should find solutions and, above all, implement them. The hon. member for Témiscamingue blames the government for failing to propose legislation. Like many other members, I cannot agree with him.

On the contrary, the liberal government has neglected nothing to date. Although it has probably been unable to correct the situation, it has left no stone unturned in the present circumstances.

The minister spoke to the House a moment ago, summarizing the attitude of the government by saying, I believe, that the government had nothing to apologize for. On the contrary, the government and the Liberals should be proud of their efforts, of their achievements to date and also of their program for the future. He also recalled that many have responsibilities in this field. The federal government has great responsibilities because of the action it must take at the level of the national economy, but the provinces also have theirs, all the more so since some of the legislation related to poverty comes under their jurisdiction. Moreover, all citizens should unite to fight poverty, one of the heaviest burdens the country has to carry during this period.

No need to try to sum up all the measures this government has adopted recently. Nevertheless, let us recall those dealing with unemployment insurance. The tax bill is not all bad. On the contrary, there are many improvements that will help better the lot of the middle class and of the poor. The government has also deployed great efforts to find housing for the poor, notably in cities.

The government has taken steps to improve the living conditions of needy veterans, not to mention the proposals mentioned by the minister with respect to income security.

Estimates concerning federal funds to be spent on the income security plan and on social programs for 1969-70 were around \$5.328 billion whereas the provincial share amounted to \$2.845 billion for a total of \$8.173 billion. Something has obviously been done. We cannot rest on our laurels and we are confident that more will be done if all of us work together in order to solve that problem.

But from what I have learned it also seems to me that, after all, the liberal party has been the first to introduce social measures and to urge other governments to continue that socialization program. As far as the present government is concerned, it does everything to strike at the very roots of poverty.

24372—67½

### *Social and Economic Security*

We recognize there are still several things to do. I think the minister admits it. Every possible effort is made. If the problem is difficult to solve, it is perhaps due to the rapid change in technological and scientific fields, which creates difficulties for a majority of the people preventing some to integrate with those who had the opportunity of going further.

However, we hope Canadians will take their responsibilities in that area. It might also be—and I think the government is considering that hypothesis—that we are now dealing with the symptoms. It may be too difficult or impossible to reach the root of the problem, if we examine the last report of the Senate Special Committee on Poverty. Indeed, the committee was constituted within the framework of our institutions and it helps the government consider the question seriously. In its report the Senate Special Committee deals with the symptom of the poverty problem in the following terms:

The system has failed because it has treated the symptoms of poverty and left the disease itself untouched.

It is probably a little like a person having a headache because he has stomach trouble. He is given aspirins instead of being treated for his digestive ailment. Yet it is first necessary to know the cause of the disorder and then to remove it. It might be a real cause, difficult to find out because of the complex problem.

Political “simplifiers” always come up with easy solutions, solutions seldom applied. It is easy to criticize those on the front line by holding up to ridicule some of their slogans like the “just society”. When the liberal party, following its leader, voiced its aims and its ideal by speaking of a “just society” we were aware, as was our leader, that such a “just society” could not be achieved by one single man or by a small group of men. It requires the help of all Canadians, of all governments. The state ship must be pulled in the same direction.

However, one must not be so naive as to believe that the ideally just society will be achieved today or tomorrow. As we are working towards a “just society”, we should not destroy what we have already but strive more and more after that end.

• (9:30 p.m.)

In my view, we should endeavour to determine the true facts with regard to poverty. There are poor people among the young, the sick, the disabled and the older people. There are poor people in the underprivileged regions, especially in the rural areas. Some people are only temporarily poor because of illness or accidents. There are also the poor who are in a chronic state of dependence, those in the cities who have their own characteristics.

If the poor appear to be increasing in our society, it is probably because of technological progress which, in my view, is developing at a truly fantastic rate.

I remember the example given earlier by the hon. member for Témiscamingue, and I agree with him, because I also meet such people in my riding. I cannot understand that at present a husband over 65 only draws a \$135 monthly allowance, while his wife, because she is not yet 65, nor 60, gets nothing. A few months ago, she might have received \$50 or \$60, but because of the new