

Speech from the Throne

seasonally adjusted rate for January, 1972, was the same as that for January, 1971, and that almost 30 per cent—28.8 per cent, to be exact—of the total population of Canada belongs to a family in which at least one member could not find a job in 1971 or lost it in that year. And he fails to say that the Economic Council has warned that nearly 1 million new jobs must be found by 1975 if unemployment is to be brought below 4 per cent. In face of this situation, 200,000 jobs in 1971 looks like a very small number, very small potatoes, and certainly nothing to get complacent about.

What unemployment means in human terms cannot be fully understood, of course, except by those who have undergone the shock, fear and indignity of unemployment. Of the many tragic cases brought to my attention during the recent parliamentary recess, one stands out most clearly in my mind. It is that of a young man of 28 whom I have known for some years and who has tried persistently and unavailingly to get work. He has had to accept social assistance, with the stigma that it entails, particularly for the single, able bodied young person. He telephoned me one February morning to say that he had now been classified as an employable unemployed person. This meant that his clothing allowance was cut off, he no longer had access to medical help or prescription drugs, his teeth would not be given the attention they badly needed, and he was now receiving a straight \$90 a month in social assistance, the great bulk of which must go for rent. What was he to do? He just could not get work. With food and clothing prices going up all the time, how could he live? In quiet despair he added, "It's pretty tough to have this happen when you are doing all you can to lead a decent life."

• (2020)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, we run into the despair of this young man in the large cities, the small villages as well as the rural homes across Canada.

When young people do not have the opportunity to work, their whole future suffers. When they have to sit around, day after day, month after month, year after year, not doing anything to use their talents, to earn their bread and participate in the life of their country, can anyone wonder that they end up despairing, taking drugs or revolting.

[English]

Instead of boasting of all the new jobs his government has created, the Prime Minister would do well to consider the deep desperation of the 30 per cent of Canadians belonging to families afflicted by the cancer of unemployment during this past year. If this government knew or cared about this suffering, they would realize the absolute necessity of creating an income floor, a guaranteed income below which no Canadian would be allowed to fall, and it would not be a measure of doubletalk where a means test is dignified by the title of "guaranteed income." What we need is a genuine guaranteed income coupled with a genuine guaranteed opportunity for useful work.

Guaranteed income, guaranteed work, these are the Siamese twins that should be separated only when people are

[Mrs. MacInnis.]

too old, too ill or too handicapped for useful activity. The overwhelming majority of people want to pull their own weight, to stand on their own feet as long as they are able to do so. You have only to refer to the recent statements of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro), or of the Senate Committee on Poverty in order to confirm this statement. Let the government give them this opportunity, and let the government not say that it is impossible to provide a guaranteed income.

Realizing, at least in some measure, the danger of allowing a whole generation of young folk to rust and rot in enforced idleness, the government last summer—and now I will give the government a bouquet—created something useful, the Opportunities for Youth program. Of course there were mistakes, of course there were foolish projects funded, but for the first time of which I am aware the government deliberately decided to fund people who needed funding as a group to enable them to carry out imaginative projects which would help the community and develop them at the same time. Instead of giving all the funding to conventional business enterprises, this government took a chance and gave a relatively modest share to help young people develop themselves.

I am glad to say that I think this experiment has paid off, and I believe that the local initiatives program will be even more successful. So far so good. However, these programs are far too hit-and-miss in their character. They need to be accompanied by long-range planning to ensure that they mesh into the needs and the other activities of the community. For example, there is not too much use in funding people to carry out renovations when the percentage of money for materials with which to do it is so low. To my knowledge, only the government of Saskatchewan has sought to overcome this deficiency on Ottawa's part. It has provided and is providing grants for materials for the local initiatives programs as a means of making sure that they can be carried through to fruition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. MacInnis: This is not the first time that Saskatchewan has pioneered something which the federal government later has taken up as being something which at least should be adopted, although in nearly all cases it is too little and too late when it does adopt them. Long-range planning cannot be carried out exclusively by the mandarins of Ottawa but most involve all levels of government and all levels of voluntary groups concerned.

• (2030)

The planning from Ottawa results in a procrustean situation, with the computer in the role of Procrustes. When the traveller is too long for the bed of Procrustes, a suitable length of his legs is chopped off, and if he is too short, his limbs are stretched to fit the bed, without any warning about folding, stapling or mutilating! In other words, people are made to conform to the demands of the computer rather than the other way around. If anything were necessary to prove that to the hilt, it is the delays, the mistakes and the fouling-up of the unemployment insurance payments that have been made with Ottawa in control of so much of the machinery. Good planning must take the particular needs of the people concerned into