

*The Address—Mrs. G. MacInnis*

First of all, there is the government's own profile on poverty prepared for the federal-provincial conference held here in the month of December, which tells us that 23 per cent of the Canadian people, nearly one quarter of the Canadian people, live in what is defined by sociologists as a state of poverty in its varying degrees right down to destitution, and by poverty they mean those people who live on an income below \$3,000 a year.

Before anybody gets to thinking that this is a princely income let us compare it with our own, and let us think what it would be like for us to live on \$250 a month or \$62.50 a week which is the basis on which a great many people do their calculating. We would find that we would have a rather thin time making do on that amount. Yet at present nearly one quarter of the Canadian people have only that much income on which to live. Imagine a family of four or a much larger number of people existing on \$250 a month.

I feel that the government's fault lies in the fact of its complacency in the face of this situation because, in a situation where you have almost a quarter of your population living in poverty, to refer in the Throne Speech to the need for cleaning up pockets of poverty is a pitifully inadequate way of looking at the situation. We should realize that when we have a quarter of the population living in poverty this calls for heroic measures and high priorities which so far have not been forthcoming from the government in any tangible way.

In addition to that survey I should like to refer to an excellent one made a year ago, "Poverty in Ontario—1964", by the Ontario Federation of Labour, which contains very similar findings. Another survey came out very recently entitled, "A Preliminary Report of Rural Poverty in Four Selected Areas," by the Canadian Welfare Council which has its headquarters in Ottawa. It deals with four rural areas, one in Nova Scotia, one in Quebec, one in Ontario and one in Manitoba. In fact I believe the Minister of Forestry (Mr. Sauv ) made a very eloquent speech concerning this survey to a group in Toronto the other day and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) also made reference to it at a recent conference held in that city.

There are any number of these reports but the last to which I want to make reference is one which was published in my city, Vancouver, by the Community Chest and Councils of the Greater Vancouver area, and which was prepared for the federal-provincial conference held in Ottawa in December.

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

The reason I particularly want to refer to it is that it has a direct bearing on my own city and constituency.

It states at the beginning:

After considering what we have learned about those residents—

That is, the people who live in poverty.

—in our area who are dependant, we wish to submit the following statements for your consideration:

1. Chronically dependant families and individuals exist in the Greater Vancouver area in sufficiently large numbers to constitute a major social concern.

I look in the throne speech in vain to find anything dealing with this major social concern.

2. As a group they characteristically display many severe problems—physical, social and economic. They appear to have limited access to social and economic opportunities and limited ability to make use of opportunities that are available to them. By and large they remain basically dependent during good economic conditions and bad, and tend to transmit their dependency traits to their children.

3. They are large users of public and voluntary health and welfare services, but these services at their present levels have had little permanent impact on their rehabilitation.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Then it goes on to point out, and this is the thing I wish to draw particularly to the attention of the house:

It appears from our data that 6.8 per cent of families with children in the eastern half of Vancouver—

Half of the eastern half of Vancouver is Vancouver-Kingsway.

—remain in a dependant status on a continuing basis, almost irrespective of varying economic conditions and the opportunities available to them.

Mr. Speaker, when one family in fifteen with children, in the eastern half of one of our big cities, is dependant entirely on the state for its income, then the time has arrived to ask what we are going to do about poverty in this country.

Who are these individuals? These are people whom all of us know among our constituents and our friends. They are the older workers and the pensioners, the unemployed and the underemployed, the school dropouts and the undereducated, the widows and fatherless families, the disabled and the sick, the retarded and the mentally ill, the small farmers and the commercial workers, the native Indians and the new immigrants. These are the poor, and together they make up a frightening total of misery and neglect. They live on the margin of misery.