

As a further protection against the isolation of individuals caused by economic deprivation, the fundamental reform of social security legislation is essential. Employment procedures and programs must be reviewed and improved, in order to make training and placement services adequate to the needs of disadvantaged citizens.

The personal dignity of the individual as well as his participation or involvement in the just society remain illusions without income security.

To achieve this end, that is to protect against isolation the victims of poverty under its multiple and often hidden forms, and to replace them in the context of a society which attempts to be just, the government has a tool whose value is unchallenged, that is, the report submitted by the Senate Special Committee on Poverty.

The members of this committee spent three years studying this problem. Eight hundred and ten witnesses were heard, 209 briefs were compiled and studied, most of them bolstered by statistics, from organisations and individuals, from all classes of society, and from all parts of this country.

The report of this committee, tabled in this house on November 16, 1971, has since been praised by the press, radio and television, by responsible citizens' committees concerned about human dignity, by the poor and the public in general. It has created such an interest that the first printing of this report has been exhausted for more than three months.

This government has been so inspired by this report, that it seemed to have ignored *a priori*, judging from legislation that it intends to put before Parliament in the course of this new session, and which deals mainly with income security, improvement of employment programs and services, review of the social security system, legal aid for the poor, etc.

Without claiming to be a miracle solution to the problem of poverty, this report is much more than a laudable effort. It remains the only global study undertaken in this country on this problem as a whole, and represents, as I said, a document whose value is unchallenged.

Reputable editorialists have claimed that a royal commission of inquiry on the same subject would have sat longer, would have cost the taxpayer much more, and would have been hard put to present as complete and comprehensive a report as that tabled by the chairman of the committee, Senator Croll.

To free the poor from their isolation from society is one of the priority goals the government has recognized in the legislation it will introduce in Parliament during the current session. That was precisely the purpose of the surveys made by the Senate Committee on Poverty.

Indeed, what is poverty? To start with, we agree with the usually accepted definition: whoever lacks the necessities of life: food, lodging, clothing, is poor.

Reflection, however, proves this concept incomplete. Studying the briefs submitted to the Senate committee by groups and individuals from different regions, with different backgrounds and mentalities and hearing the witnesses in the field considerably changes the dimensions of that preconceived concept.

Often, from our point of view, we consider to be poor a man who is quite content with his lot. On the other hand, we often consider to be well off someone who complains about his misfortune.

The poor in Labrador and the poor in Whitehorse, the poor in a large city and the poor in a small fishing village need not necessarily show the same characteristics.

The objective aspect of poverty, which is computed on paper by specialists using impersonal statistics and defining as poor a person whose income is less than a certain sum, must be supplemented by aspects of subjectivity and relativity, which are more intangible and more difficult to grasp.

Subjectively and relatively, poverty varies among individuals on the basis of education, environment, occupation and age.

So, we are always surprised at the difficulties that authorities have to face in their efforts to eliminate slums. Families living in dilapidated houses without the most basic sanitary facilities had to be forcibly evicted and relocated in accommodations with all modern facilities. Why? Because they would not part with their old possessions, they would not break with a past, however miserable, to which they were devoted.

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Some people who do not own a car can easily do without it. Others feel poor and frustrated if their car, television set, refrigerator, et cetera are not of the most recent colour and model.

Some who live in comfortable houses but surrounded with neighbours who have heated garages and swimming pools feel poor and humiliated, whereas their house would be considered luxurious if it were moved to a more modest part of town.

Some people feel poor when they lose their jobs because they can no longer afford the same standard of living. Others who have been unemployed for years are satisfied with their lot. They receive social welfare benefits, their families have the necessities of life and they have more leisure than their neighbours who must work for a living. They may even refuse a job, because it would not pay much more than what they are getting in benefits.

Thus we see that poverty is objective and subjective at the same time, because it has various aspects.

Since it is difficult to define poverty with mathematical precision, the report of the Senate Special Committee on Poverty, which I mentioned earlier, has considered as victims of poverty all persons suffering from some kind of misfortune: the unemployed, people without a steady job, the disabled, the old and, generally speaking, people without income or people without a sufficient income.

If it is difficult to define poverty, it is even more difficult to determine its causes which are as numerous as they are confused and unforeseeable.

Some of them, such as physical deficiencies, unemployment, inflation, may be detected easily. Others, such as ignorance, laziness, incompetence, are much more difficult to assess.

There is, for instance, much ignorance about the levels of jurisdiction—federal, provincial or municipal levels—