

influence on our planning, progress, and programs, then I think this may be a step in the right direction. I will support it, but I will want to take a good look at it, just the same as hon. members over there.

I want to say to the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) I was disappointed when he suggested there might be an indifferent approach on the part of members on this side of the House. I do not think that is the case, and it certainly is not from my point of view. I certainly know that is not the intention of the minister either. It is true we would like to see the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) take part in this debate. I assume that she will, but I know there are certain representations to be made on her behalf as the minister, and certain on behalf of her department.

I do appreciate, however, the hon. member's support for this motion. As I said before, I think this is a step in the right direction. There is no question that the Minister of Justice is, as you have pointed out, somewhat overworked. He has very many responsibilities, but he is capable and competent, and he is prepared to take on this task. I am sure he will do a good job on this as he has on other jobs.

Let me also mention to the hon. member for St. John's East that I appreciate his concern about children. He has a social conscience, but we on this side do too, and I think he will agree with me that when we have discussed matters concerning child abuse and others concerning health and welfare, we have pretty well agreed that this is the kind of thing with which we want to deal. It is unfortunate, however, that more action had not been taken on the task force report with regard to the international year of the child. Maybe in due course this kind of thing can be addressed as well.

In addition, let me say with regard to his suggestion concerning the single-parent family and other groups in society which have not been considered as much as they ought to have been in the past, hopefully under this new departmental arrangement that subject will be addressed as well. I will certainly make every effort I can to see that many of these things are addressed in the proper way.

As a country, Canada is a miracle and an enigma. In spite of physical barriers, a hard climate, a sparse population, linguistic and cultural diversity, and the homogenizing influence of our powerful neighbour to the south, Canadians have for over 100 years bonded together to develop this land and to share its benefits. They have built for us a peaceable country of opportunity unequalled anywhere else in the world. The better life enjoyed by Canadians is possible in no small measure because of the social policies they have collectively instituted through their municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

Today, Canadians are guaranteed a minimum income and minimum social services essential to ensuring at least a minimum necessary quality of life through our social welfare and social services programs. Through the federal old age, veterans, blindness and disability pension systems, through federal unemployment insurance and through provincial workman's

Social Development Ministry

compensation, the economic insecurity which can result from life's contingencies has been greatly alleviated.

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Through federal-provincial co-operation in funding and providing essential health services, and through federal-provincial and municipal co-operation in support of education, Canadians are assured equal access to the means of maintaining a healthy existence and securing a prosperous future for themselves.

Although Canadians have historically viewed public policy as a legitimate tool by which to improve the quality of Canadian life, and although the public demand for expanding the scope of social policy has been generally uniform across the country, the federal nature of our political system—in which the greater constitutional responsibility for social policy lies with the provincial governments—has allowed the diverse, provincially bounded communities of Canada to define their own specific social goals and priorities and to vary their program approaches in line with their own values. This is a very healthy and innovative factor.

While we have had great success in social policy in Canada, we have had some problems as well. The problems are rooted, I believe, in two increasingly erroneous assumptions which the creation of a ministry of state for social development should help to correct. First, during the 1950s, and especially the 1960s, there was a tacit assumption dominant in almost all western governments that any social problem could be solved by throwing enough money at it.

In those days of affluent governments, policy makers seemed more concerned with getting social programs established quickly to meet obvious pressing needs than in finding the most effective and efficient means of delivering programs and applying public funds. Given the primitive nature of the analytic tools which decision makers had to work with, mistakes and waste were probably inevitable. But the state of the art of policy analysis and its techniques are becoming more sophisticated. Tools for measuring policy and program efficiency and effectiveness are being developed, and public decision makers have come to recognize that spending money or providing services will not solve social problems unless the delivery is targetted accurately at, at least, public cost. This will be a major concern of the new ministry of state for social development.

The second erroneous assumption was that any social problem could be effectively dealt with by a neat compartmentalization of responsibility within functional government departments. In the past, insufficient attention was, in my opinion, paid to the interrelationships and interdependence between programs. As society and its problems become increasingly complex, the inappropriateness of this myopic assumption becomes more evident.

For example, the Department of National Health and Welfare cannot achieve its income security mandate without taking into account the functions of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Department of Labour. We are becoming