

Social and Economic Security

that must be stressed is that only 2 per cent or 3 per cent of those on welfare attempt to beat the system.

What bothers many people is that there are employable individuals who refuse to work. So far as I am concerned, a minimum of assistance should be given to that type of person. A lot of people are very concerned about this problem. It seems to me that we are giving assistance to people who do not need it. We should reassess our priorities in this regard.

The motion before us reads:

That this House condemns the government for its failure to propose legislation establishing a social and economic security plan placing all Canadians above the poverty level.

The motion is not quite correct. The hon. member for High Park (Mr. Deakon) gave a list of programs that the government has introduced. He told us how much money is being spent, how the programs are working and said that Canada is a great country in which to live. I do not think anyone would question the last statement—but there are so many programs that it is a real fiasco. The policy has no long-term goals. The federal and provincial governments are involved in administering and financing income security programs. Under social insurance we have the federal government dealing with unemployment insurance, veterans pensions and the Canada Pension Plan, while the provincial governments deal with workmen's compensation and the Quebec Pension Plan, comparable to and co-ordinated with the Canada Pension Plan.

Under demogrants the federal government deals with old age security, family allowances and supplementary family allowance programs in Quebec and Newfoundland; provincial governments deal with Quebec schooling allowances. The guaranteed income is administered by the federal government. We have social assistance administered by the federal government, dealing with war veterans allowances and social assistance for Indians on reserves, and Eskimos. Then we have—

An hon. Member: Slow down, Linc.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I read that too quickly, and I extend my apologies. What I am trying to say is that we have an extremely complex plan with no long-term goals.

There is a booklet called "Canadian Business" which tells what is wrong with the present system. Reprint No. 7009 is entitled "Guaranteed minimum income: there's more than one answer". I was very impressed with this little reprint by James L. Clare because he talks about the "existing social welfare income maintenance schemes" and then asks several questions. The answers to every question except the second one is "No," and the answer to the second question is "Often none".

The questions and answers are: eliminates poverty, no; incentive for poor to work, often none; breaks "poverty-cycle" and removes need for public housing and other subsidies to the poor, no; readily and fully understandable to poor, no; visible and open for comprehension by non-poor, no; takes care of sporadic and seasonal unemployment most readily, no; eliminates testing, no; eliminates "snooping", no; minimizes administrative overheads, no. It appears to me that the structure that has been set up is

[Mr. Alexander.]

meant to maintain poverty. This is what a lot of people find disturbing.

I am running out of time, Mr. Speaker, but let me say that no matter what type of program we have, we still must have a policy of full employment. This is the key.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) indicated that approximately 13 per cent of the people within the five million I mentioned are employable unemployed. So it does not matter what we are talking about in terms of full employment, whether it is 3 per cent or 4 per cent—but certainly is not 7.1 per cent seasonally adjusted. I think that is scandalous when we think of what the results actually mean. Here we are really perpetuating poverty by creating unemployment.

We do not have time now to go into all the ramifications of this problem. When you do not give the people of Canada purchasing power through development of our economy it is not difficult to see that the butcher, the baker and the candlestick-maker are deprived of income. That is why I am concerned about the attitude of the government and about this tax bill which affects vital institutions in our country.

I think of our multinational corporations and how the government is not willing to throw a little "shaft" into them and thereby get more money from them. At this time, too, the United States is bringing in the DISC program. Then there is the recent surcharge which, as things get rough, will probably go as high as 15 per cent. This government brings in capital gains and a labour bill that certainly had the business community—I am not saying "up in arms" but they are questioning the attitude of the government. If we are talking about increased productivity which leads to increased employment, how can we accept the competition bill that was brought in? It would upset the whole nation.

I see the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) laughing. I do not want to get to him because—

Mr. Marchand: Increased productivity does not create employment; that is the problem.

Mr. Alexander: His program is creating unemployment in some areas in order to create employment in other areas. I do not think we have heard the last of that.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Name one case.

Mr. Alexander: We need incentives, and as long as the government proceeds—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. It being six o'clock, this House stands adjourned until eight o'clock tonight.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.