

Labour Conditions

will have in areas which its jurisdiction does not cover. One of these, which has been mentioned by many members including myself, is the pressure it will bring on the provinces to pass a similar type of legislation which will cover all employees across Canada. Related in a sense to that effect is the consideration that the legislation will also go some of the way toward combating poverty in Canada.

Last evening I said there had been a great deal of talk in the United States on the question of poverty. A considerable amount of legislative action has been taken in the U.S. to combat poverty, and I think much legislative action has also been taken in this country to deal with it. However, I do not believe there has been enough discussion in this parliament on the extent of poverty, and it would be useful if all hon. members were fully aware that it is a serious problem in the country. Hon. members should know how many people are affected, and should be aware that many authorities claim that minimum standards legislation, and particularly minimum wage legislation, are tools to combat poverty.

In this connection I refer to a speech made by the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen) to the trade union summer school at St. Francis Xavier University on June 24 last, in which he disclosed some very interesting figures. In that speech he dealt with one set of figures which I think are alarming. He said:

But when we go even deeper into the figures—

He was referring to the figures derived from the last census in 1961.

—we find that among 3,600,000 non-farm families in Canada almost 850,000 have cash incomes of less than \$3,000 a year. That's more than one out of every five families.

If you multiply that number of families who have cash incomes of less than \$3,000 a year by 3.9, which is the average sized Canadian family, we can see there are well over 3 million Canadians subsisting on something less than \$3,000 a year, and in many cases substantially less than that. This could certainly be regarded as poverty.

Another interesting quotation from the minister's speech which I think should be brought to the attention of the house is this:

We will do the federal part in raising minimum wages without destroying job opportunities.

No matter where one looks he finds there is always this advocacy that minimum standards legislation he passed in any purposeful

[Mr. Munro.]

campaign to deal with poverty. Again I say I hope this legislation will be an incentive to provincial legislatures to pass similar measures that will deal with the alarming number of Canadians living at or below subsistence levels.

Further figures are also given in the recent ninth volume of *Canadian Labour* a Canadian Labour Congress monthly publication. They point to the necessity for this type of legislation being passed by parliament, and to the necessity for other legislation designed to curb poverty. In its publication, *Canadian Labour*, the congress pointed out that according to the last census 30 per cent of Canadian wage earners do not earn enough to pay income tax, and they estimate that 30 per cent represents 2 million workers. It further pointed out that 55 per cent of those who do pay income tax earn less than \$4,000 a year, and 34 per cent earn less than \$3,000 a year. It further estimated that the number of those paying income tax but earning less than \$3,000 a year totalled 1½ million workers. If that 1½ million is added to the 2 million who do not pay income tax at all, it gives a figure of about 3½ million people.

These figures are at some variance with the figures I quoted earlier from the minister's speech, but they do emphasize the alarming number of Canadians living at or below subsistence levels, and they stress the necessity for this type of legislation. If we multiply this figure of 3½ million by 3.9, which as I say is the average size family, we get some idea of the possible number of Canadians existing on extremely low incomes. Everybody can interpret these figures in different ways and some people come to more alarming conclusions than others, but no matter how one looks at them the conclusion reached is certainly alarming. Other Canadians who have undertaken considerable research into this question have verified as much.

Mr. Lamberi: Would the hon. member permit a question? I wonder whether in his compilation of figures he has taken into account the incidence of double employment. Has he taken into account how many of those employed at the lower levels of wages, especially, actually occupy two jobs?

Mr. Munro: I can only answer the hon. gentleman by saying that these figures come from the dominion bureau of statistics and were accumulated during the last census in 1961. Many questions were asked when that