

international economic bodies in the world, and an overall increase in the cost of living of 8 per cent per annum.

The welfare package is not a new response, because away back on January 4 of this year we find in the Speech from the Throne references such as the one that follows. I quote from page 5 of *Hansard* of January 4, 1973:

Subject to the appropriate agreement being reached with the Provinces, changes to improve the Canada Pension Plan will be introduced to provide higher pensions for widows, widows with dependent children and the disabled and to make other needed amendments.

Weeks went by; months went by, and on April 18 we saw the presentation, with great fanfare, of the orange paper. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) said on April 18, as recorded at page 3404 of *Hansard*:

In this regard, we advance two specific proposals in relation to the Canada Pension Plan which we would like to embody in legislation this year—subject to a provincial consensus. This involves an increase in the level of yearly maximum pensionable earning—and the removal of the ceiling on cost-of-living escalations of Canada Pension Plan benefits.

That was said in April. This is September. All this indicates something less than emergent galvanic action. Indeed, it prompts one to ask how long it will take to get these improvements into our legislative stream.

I ask again, as I asked on Friday and Wednesday of last week, where is the delay? Why is there a delay in this process? A lot of time has elapsed since January 4; a lot of time has elapsed since January 18. Were there not any dominion-provincial conferences in this period? Were there no conversations? Were there no visits to provincial capitals? Why were these matters not discussed? Why, in all the time that has elapsed from January, were the provinces not asked for their approval of this particular matter?

In the old days people used to be concerned if one spoke for buncombe. There is no room for buncombe in a country that is going through the times that this one is going through. So, that part of the prime ministerial statement to which reference has been made was misleading. It was not a new item at all. But there is another statement which is much more serious. I was amazed to hear the Prime Minister say, as recorded at page 6183 of *Hansard*:

As for the poorest families in Canadian society, the federal government shares 50 per cent of the cost of social assistance paid by the provinces to families in need. The government said in August, and repeats today, that it stands ready to pay 50 per cent of the costs of increasing these payments to compensate for higher prices. Certain provinces have already acted to do so, and others are undoubtedly considering taking such action soon.

Has someone suggested that the Canada Assistance Plan is a new measure to deal with the current cost of living emergency?

● (1510)

The Canada Assistance Plan has been in operation for a good many years. It is in essence a 50/50 sharing by dominion and provincial governments. Therefore, it was not any new pronouncement, to use a favourite word of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). In fact, in the 1971 Annual Report of the minister, in

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the chapter dealing with the Canada Assistance Plan, it is pointed out, and I quote:

No upper limit is placed on the benefits for which federal sharing is available.

The dispossessed and the needy were not given anything new last week when it was suggested that this is a new corrective measure. This is a new remedial promise. Many months ago I suggested to the minister that what was needed in the Canada Assistance Plan was a new formula. In this emergency, let the government of Canada undertake to help the dispossessed by giving 75 per cent of the cost until such time as the elaborate new look at social services is completed. When I mentioned that last spring, the minister said it was a short-term bandaid type of approach.

In March, 75 per cent was not acceptable, but the mere statement that 50 per cent would continue to be paid made the headlines in the great prime ministerial statement last week. I hope those in Canada who stand in need, not only of welfare payments, but in need because of the times in which they live, through no fault of their own, of greater aid are not taken in by this pretended munificence, this phony benevolence indicated in the statement.

Last Friday when dealing with this subject, I expressed my regret that the figure of \$20 per child in the family allowance was not adopted instead of the minimum figure of \$12. I said then and I say now, if we can legislate \$12 on an interim basis, we can legislate \$20 and give a little more assistance to the people in need.

When the once entrenched Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, introduced this measure in 1945—the minister and I were young indeed, perhaps adolescents, depending on how quickly we developed—the figure then as a matter of income redistribution, and that in essence is what these types of payments are, amounted to 1.45 per cent of the Gross National Product. In 1973, our existing payments amount to .5 per cent of the Gross National Product. In other words, the Minister of National Health and Welfare has been presiding over a family allowance system about one third as generous as that of the cautious Mackenzie King. To keep abreast of the value in terms of the Gross National Product which Mackenzie King gave, the present \$8 cheques would have to be \$17.40 and the \$6 would have to become \$13.

This is obviously a mathematical concept I am putting forward because we must always take into consideration the horrendous rise in the cost of living. In light of cold economics and in light of the proportion of the Gross National Product that is involved, the 12 per cent is not enormously munificent. As I say, to keep abreast of Mackenzie King, it would have to be \$13.40. The minister is almost \$1.50 below Mackenzie King; not outstanding progress, not rushing out full tilt toward a generous, compassionate welfare state. It is not the kind of galvanic progress which would guarantee that the minister's party and his party alone should remain in power forever and ever with the continual support of a certain group to my left. Geographically, they are to my left, but their performance in recent months causes me to wonder who is left and what is left.