

changes in society take place over the years they need to be adjusted and sharpened to meet more adequately the demands and shortcomings of society. For instance, in the Canada Pension Plan we have a fine measure that protects the income of widows, orphans and retired persons.

Other hon. members have already spoken about mail coming in quite frequently from people urging the government to reduce the age of retirement. In the Canada Pension Plan there are certain provisions which perhaps could be improved; for example, the disability pension that can only be obtained if a person has contributed to the plan for five years. This leads to a very sad state of affairs for people who have contributed to the plan for only four years or 4½ years and who find themselves deprived by a few months of an income that would compensate them for their unexpected disability.

Another aspect of the Canada Pension Plan which could be improved is in providing a means of integrating it with other pension plans for the benefit of immigrants who before coming to Canada contributed to pension plans in other countries. Immigrants may have worked in many other countries and contributed to social security schemes elsewhere. It would be desirable, and would not be to the cost of Canadian society, if contributions made to these social security systems in other parts of the world were somehow pooled and added together so that the beneficiary would get a pension from one administration and in one sum, rather than having to apply to several different administrations, an enormously complicated process. Then there is the situation of the woman who has no job with an employer but who does work at home. Many members have made representations to the government regarding the desirability of permitting women to benefit from the Canada Pension Plan by contributing to it even though they are at home.

The Canada Assistance Plan is another of the tools we have. I wish to refer to the role of the provincial governments under that plan. The provincial governments could implement a number of measures for senior citizens, for the disabled, or to provide services in the community for those in need. We have had some exceptional examples of certain provinces in Canada, as well as some miserable performances from others, like the province of Ontario, where use of the Canada Assistance Plan has been limited up until now.

Not much has been said during this debate about unemployment insurance, yet it is an important tool in the maintenance of the income of Canadians, particularly those in the poorer regions. This is a very substantial piece of legislation which was passed by this parliament. It was even recognized as such by hon. members opposite, who are now asking for inquiries and investigations into the operation of unemployment insurance. One year ago, five or six members of the Tory party broke ranks with their own colleagues and supported the provision of funds for unemployment insurance. If I remember correctly, all of these members came from the maritime provinces, and obviously they did this because they well knew how desirable it was and how important a part unemployment insurance has to play in income maintenance for the people in their area.

Guaranteed Income

The Income Tax Act is a very powerful piece of legislation that endeavours to redistribute income, which in a democratic society is perhaps one of the most remarkable ways of achieving social justice. We have recently completed an exercise in income tax reform. It is perhaps a pity that we were not able to introduce full rates for capital gains and we settled for one half, but this is something to look forward to in years to come and would produce additional revenue that would improve schemes of support for people in need in Canada.

● (2050)

This motion also deals with the question of inflation. Here it is important to keep in mind certain developments which have taken place on the world scene which demonstrate how the situation was precipitated in the last year. One might look at the basic commodities we use in Canada and ask what has happened in respect of the price of these commodities. If you take sugar and coffee, the increase in price over a 12-month period has been 5½ per cent. In rubber, cocoa and tin, the price has doubled in a 12-month period. The price of rice has increased for times over the period of one year.

One can realize how difficult it is for any economy to provide a satisfactory answer to people when they go shopping and find increases in the price of commodities on the shelves. The measures which have been taken by the government and which, according to the mover of the motion, are missing were quite eloquently put forward this afternoon by the hon. member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault). All I shall do, therefore, is place on the record the projected subsidies for 1974-75 for two basic consumer goods, namely, milk and bread.

In the case of milk we have a continuing indirect milk program and milk subsidy. The estimated amount of the subsidy on milk which the government of Canada is injecting into the economy is \$257 million. In the case of bread there is a continuing subsidy of \$120 million. These subsidies are accompanied by a host of other measures, such as in the case of meat which was recently announced by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). These measures have the very clear purpose of stimulating production and making it more and more desirable for farmers to increase production of certain commodities in the hope that the increase in quantity will be matched by larger volume sales.

It seems to me that this is the kind of substantial, tangible action that the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) was asking for this afternoon. Having asked for action, he continued speaking for 20 minutes. In what he said it was very difficult for us to perceive any tangible proposals or recommendations in respect of these crucial questions. These actions which have been brought forward by the government of Canada during this very difficult time have been in contrast with the 90-day period of meditation proposed by the Tory party which they call euphemistically the period of freeze. During this period—some people would call it a period of yoga—the Tory party would meditate on the measures that would follow the 90 days. After the 90-day freeze, no one knows exactly what would happen. The income policies that would follow this 90-day period of meditation are such that they have not been defined in this House in any of the debates on