

Social and Economic Security

The minister said that and he now indicates he is convinced of that. If he would accept our help, that just society could be established throughout Canada. We offer to the minister suggestions which he should discuss seriously, which he should try to understand instead of laughing at them. He knows there is no solution under the present system.

He may drain his department of all the funds possible in order to help industries barely survive, but after six months, this has not yet created jobs or settled the problem. And this government has been in power for three years. I believe that the minister is sincere when he seeks solutions, but he is working in a context where solutions are practically impossible, in a context of indebtedness, in a context where we are not the masters of our credit but the slaves of a financial system controlled by a handful of individuals who order us, most of the time from the United States, what to do in Canada. And we call our Parliament a sovereign Parliament.

I said the day before yesterday, for instance, that nothing prevents Parliament from allowing the Bank of Canada to grant loans. Besides, the law provides that the Bank of Canada can grant loans to the provinces, but the latter do not borrow due to the terms of repayment. The Bank of Canada has the authority to make loans to the provinces and municipalities for a period not exceeding six months, pursuant to section 20 of the Bank of Canada Act. All we have to do is to change the term "six months" for "60 years." Moreover, it is the period of time which we set for Indians and some underdeveloped countries. Let us allow the provinces to borrow through the Bank of Canada for six-month periods. The government takes nearly six months to set up its winter work program. When it comes to make expenditures, it is already time to reimburse; then the works are suspended. Nothing can be done.

Mr. Speaker, the minister stated on April 9, 1969 in an article entitled "The six imperatives of social justice" the following:

The first imperative of social justice is that there must be a sufficient number of jobs.

It is true. Two or three years later, the minister says: I do as much as I can, but there are no jobs, it is merely an objective which we set. Now we are trying to achieve that objective. They are not taking the necessary means to do so. For example, they have been merely endeavouring to achieve that objective for 25 years, but to no avail.

I keep on quoting:

—This is a basic economic question, but also an essential social matter.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister—and, by the way, I am happy to see him sitting in his place—that, having been directly engaged in labour and union business and having held for several years the position of president of the CNTU, he is very much aware of the fact that the purpose of economics is not merely to provide jobs but to satisfy the needs of the human being. Employment or unemployment do not matter much; we must make sure that the needs of the people are satisfied, if production allows it. And the minister certainly has little doubt that the Canadian production is sufficient to guarantee to all people the essential economy of security with freedom.

I shall now state the second imperative, that is working conditions. We do want that people be treated as human beings and not like dogs. We all know that.

I continue the quotation:

The third imperative requires that services be available to people who need them in order to benefit from job opportunities.

Everyone agrees on that.

I continue the quotation:

The fifth imperative implies that people will get help in order to satisfy the basic needs. This is the first goal of family allowances and subsidized housing and one of the objectives of assistance programs.

The sixth imperative is that people who are absolutely unable to earn their living should nevertheless receive an adequate income. This is the purpose of the disabled aid programs and others of this type; it is also the basic object of general assistance programs.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, that situation exists throughout Canada, especially in the province of Quebec.

This morning I received a letter from the Saguenay region. In fact it came from Les Buissons. A mother with eight children, whose husband died some time ago, in 1970, describes to me in that letter how she collected some insurance and used it to build a house in order to shelter herself and her eight children, one of whom is four years old. At present she gets a monthly welfare payment of some \$230. With that amount she must support a family of nine, meet the ordinary expenses, pay for the heating, the electricity, the telephone and the upkeep of the children.

This mother now has to live on \$230 a month, in a rich country like ours, although one of the government's priorities is to help reach the basic objective of welfare programs so as to give needy people a chance to lead a better life.

Is the government going to maintain that a mother with eight children can live on \$230 a month? That woman keeps going to her district welfare bureau, in the Saguenay area, only to be told by the chief officer: The criteria prevent us from giving you assistance. So, because the criteria forbid their receiving assistance, a mother and her eight children, who have to attend school, are left to live in abject poverty.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of similar cases in Canada, and yet the government still hesitates to introduce legislation which will provide assistance to Canadians with low incomes or no income at all.

I have with me another declaration made by the hon. member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), entitled: "Towards a just society."

The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion seems to indicate that there will never be a "just society". His colleague, the hon. member for Papineau, says: "Towards a just society." As far as he is concerned, he is going there, but the minister says: You are not going. But he says he is going anyway!

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Papineau declared and I quote:

Instead of having a guaranteed annual income plan which we are presently unable to afford,—

I become incensed against such brainless people who maintain that we cannot afford a guaranteed annual