

Family Income Security Plan

therefore picks out this example which will cost them a little money.

I and the members of this party think the hon. member has misjudged the intelligence of the middle income voters in this country. I believe the members of the New Democratic Party have belittled themselves and the principles for which they stand. I think the leader of the New Democratic Party speaks with a forked tongue. He talks about policies designed to make the poor better off as setting class against class. I think his own design in picking out these contrived examples is to do precisely that, to turn the middle income group against the poor.

The leader of the so-called party of the left seems to be ready to resort to tactics of this kind. Now we see the real politics of polarization. Again he picks out the most contrived example in the middle income range to point out a marginal increase. We ask: Do the New Democrats feel they can win votes in this way, by disavowing everything they have said they stand for during the last decade? Does the leader of that party really believe he can cynically count on the tactics of polarization?

We know that at one time the socialists went about trying to constructively use the tactics of polarization. That was when they tried to polarize the poor against the rich to bring home their point and get action to alleviate their circumstances. Now they have moved up a notch and would endeavour to polarize the middle income group against the poor.

An hon. Member: The government's economic policies are doing that.

Mr. Munro: I do not know what the New Democrats think they will gain, in terms of appeal, from the Canadian people. Many of the people in the middle income group are not prepared to support the New Democratic Party in any event. Even if they believe the New Democratic Party, they will think this is such a desperate and cynical move that they will not approve its tactics.

Mr. Gilbert: We are getting to you.

Mr. Munro: The New Democrats say they are getting to me. I want them to get to me one of these days on an election platform in Canada, before the people of Canada and the middle income groups whom they are cynically manipulating for support and using as a justification for the fact that they intend to vote against this bill. I do not think they will stand up very well.

I would like to tell that party something about my experiences with the middle income group in this country. I have been going across the country talking to many of these people. I agree that some of them, apparently the ones to whom the New Democratic Party are listening, rather resent the fact that they are losing their family allowance, but on reassessment they indicated to me that they were prepared to lose part or all of it if it would be of tangible assistance to people in worse circumstances than theirs. Of course, they also said this applied so long as the wealthy in this country also lose all their benefits. That is precisely what this legislation provides. They know there is far too large a group of the work force earning a marginal income which means there is little incentive to

work. They know the wage scales do not take into account the number of dependants but merely the value of the labour to the employer.

They know that a worker's wages do not provide adequate compensation to a man who has family responsibilities, and that this discourages him and provides little incentive for him to remain in the labour force. They know there is inducement for him to go on welfare. They know that a man with a marginal income must receive incremental assistance. They are prepared to join the ranks of other Canadians in attempting to do something about it and to build incentive back into the welfare scheme, as well as attempting to make up for deficiencies in the minimum wage laws and provide incremental income to the man with a family.

The people in the middle income group are prepared to pay their fair share to see that this is done. They know that the man earning an income of \$5,000 with children is living in poverty in Canada. They know that it is the unorganized worker about whom so many of us should be concerned. He is the income earner who does not have a union to represent him. They also know something about the minimum wage legislation. Many of these income earners know that the minimum wage legislation only assists single persons and married couples without children. But even as low as the income of low income earners is, whatever tangible benefit they do have from the minimum wage legislation is diminished in terms of anything approaching a semblance of adequacy every time an additional child comes into the family. The middle income workers know that only by raising minimum wage levels above the social assistance level will there be any real incentive to work. They know that the only way this can be done is by legislation providing incremental income based on additional children. Once we bring in legislation of this kind we can realistically raise our minimum wage levels and perhaps make a joint, effective attack on poverty.

• (1550)

In that connection let us look at the minimum wage levels in some provinces, including those which have NDP governments. I will pick one province in particular, Manitoba. It provides for a minimum wage of \$1.65 per hour. Extrapolated in terms of a week of 40 hours, this works out to \$66 a week. How can a man with a family live on that? How much is it a year? It is \$3,432 a year. Why would that man with a family not go on welfare? The minimum wage levels there depress the social assistance rates and ensure their inadequacy.

Under this legislation, if a man has three children and, say, two are over 12 and one is under 12, we can give him an extra \$660 a year. That, combined with a more realistic minimum wage law, would at least elevate that man to the poverty line. Surely we must all agree that taking the legislation in terms of what the minimum wage laws can do, it would be virtually impossible to expect it to take care of the situation of the low income earner with a family. It can relate only to the single and married people without children. But we can have a realistic policy to combat poverty when we combine the minimum wage laws with FISP, which would provide incremental income such as I have just stated, and in the process would