

Guaranteed Income

The federal government has put forward many steps and we intend to continue to do so. The provinces have also made important moves last year, particularly by increasing welfare benefits. I suggest that the provinces should also escalate the welfare benefits they are paying under the Canada Assistance Plan.

The federal government has escalated almost all its social benefits and I suggest that the provinces should seriously consider the advantage they would derive from taking the same steps as Parliament in this regard.

● (2150)

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by simply saying that I am proud, like my colleagues on this side of the House, to be long to a government that achieved this review of social security and that brought forward in this House measures like those that were proposed last year. I am sure that the Canadian public recognize the value and the efficiency of the measures that were taken, and that they will continue to support the government that applies them.

Mr. Latulippe: Mr. Speaker, would the minister allow a question?

Mr. Lalonde: Agreed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Latulippe: Does the minister admit that all existing welfare programs would be abolished and replaced by one program, the guaranteed income program, and can he tell us what he intends to do with the program or proposals contained in the report on poverty and made by its chairman, Senator Croll, when he says that the guaranteed annual income would cost \$1,900 million at the most?

Mr. Lalonde: I thought I had made it quite clear in my speech that the introduction of a guaranteed annual income would not involve the elimination of existing social services. On the contrary, those services might be extended to meet the needs of society. The guaranteed annual income might replace present welfare payments, but all existing social services will have to be maintained. I mentioned the unemployed, the disabled, the unwed mothers. I could list a whole series of others. Those social services will have to remain.

About Senator Croll's proposals, I would say that we could have a \$100 million guaranteed income if you will. We would only have to set the guaranteed annual income at such a low level that it would cost practically nothing. All depends on the level it will be set, and this is a simple matter of cost.

For instance, when Senator Croll's report was made public, there was a general protest throughout the country, even from the opposition members who said, if my memory serves me right, that Senator Croll was not offering a guaranteed annual income but guaranteed poverty. Finally, everyone rejected the report and its proposals as totally inadequate.

I do not think Senator Croll's report can now be held up as the last word on the whole matter.

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to take the floor immediately after the hon.

[Mr. Lalonde.]

Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) on such an important subject.

Of course, I have five minutes left, and I would like to use them in a sensible way, in order to take part in the best possible way in the establishment of a social policy which would make it possible to eliminate poverty as much as possible in Canada.

We often speak about the third world, Mr. Speaker. We think that the third world is in Africa, in Europe, in Asia, and we forget that there is a third world in our own parishes, as the hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare rightly said earlier. There is poverty in his own constituency; and the Senate Committee on Poverty was concerned with the poor I think. That is the reason why they tabled a report containing recommendations that sought a solution to the problem of poverty in Canada, recommendations to the effect that we must necessarily adopt a guaranteed minimum annual income policy. In his report, Senator Croll and his colleagues were not frightened by figures. I think they have exaggerated more than the Social Crediters can do because, on page 23, one can read, and I quote:

The poverty line for a person \$2,140 per year.
Income guaranteed level, \$1,500.

We speak about \$1,200 and it goes thus for people of all other classes. When this report was published, the Minister of National Health and Welfare was today's Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro), who gave the following comments about this report, as one could see in the November 11 1971 edition of *Le Droit*:

It shows common sense but is too costly.

Mr. Speaker, was man born before money or did money come before? Who created money? Is it man or is it money that created man? We always judge according to dollars and do not think about the physical potential of this country. Canada is rich, but 60 per cent of the Canadian people are poor.

That is why, following a responsible inquiry, the senators wanted to make recommendations and since the recommendations were rejected, the chairman expressed his feelings in the following words. They are from a Liberal and not from me. I quote:

Disappointed, Senator Croll deplored the fact that governments always find good reasons to excuse themselves for rejecting the project.

An hon. Member: How true it is!

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): They have been doing that for 40 years. In his comments on the Senate's report on poverty, the former Minister of National Health and Welfare explained that it could cost up to \$2 billion to the federal government to achieve the annual guaranteed income project and the present minister who succeeded him is talking about \$26 billion. Let us see if we can agree on figures. I have here official statistics about what is being done throughout Canada at the federal, provincial and municipal levels and if we add the administration costs of all those programs, we come to the sizeable amount of \$21 billion. Therefore, we have come to the point where we are playing with billions of dollars. What can we do about it? It is this century, the year 1974 that