

*Adjournment Debate*SOCIAL SECURITY—DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF
GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOME PROGRAM

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, February 17, as reported in *Hansard* at page 3264, I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) questions about the introduction of a guaranteed annual income program. The exchanges between us on that occasion are on record. No doubt the minister read them again while preparing to answer the question I am raising this evening, so I need not repeat those exchanges. Instead I want to urge on the minister the necessity of an answer as early as possible to my question regarding the introduction of a guaranteed annual income program.

● (2210)

Even since I asked the question on February 17, I suggest that conditions have become more urgent. I know that every time the minister and I discuss the escalation of old age security and guaranteed income supplement payments, we differ about the adequacy of that escalation. It is my contention that the escalation payments are always behind and that they do not cover the actual expenses faced by senior citizens. Perhaps we could carry on that argument, but I am sure the minister will agree with me that our senior citizens' needs are getting more difficult for them to meet.

During the course of the debate on the proposal for spouses' allowances for those between 60 and 65 who are living with a spouse over 65, a good deal was said about the needs of other persons in that age bracket. When we brought out that fact, the minister and those on the other side of the House reminded us, quite properly, of persons under 60 who are facing economic difficulties.

There is the whole problem that is faced by those who are employed but who have incomes that are insufficient to meet today's cost of living. In other words, there is poverty right across the board. A good deal has been said in recent weeks and months about the poverty faced by children in this land. I have in mind, of course, the report entitled "Poor Kids" and the excellent speeches which the Minister of National Health and Welfare has made on the subject of poverty as it rears its ugly head through many areas of our society.

I listened with interest yesterday to a program over CBC radio regarding the status of women. At one point I heard the minister's voice answering questions, so I trust that he listened to that whole program as well. An important fact was brought out, namely, that one of the things that must be done if we are going to achieve real equality for women with men in our society is to arrive at a program that will provide women with incomes. I suggest that a guaranteed annual income might be a better answer than some of the other suggestions that are made.

I could go on, but I hope I have made my point that whether we are talking about older people, children, people who are working or people who are not working, there is in this land, despite its affluence, far too much poverty, far too many people without sufficient income to meet today's living costs.

[Mr. Turner (London East).]

The minister is committed to a guaranteed annual income program. It has to come and it has to come soon, not in the year 2000. I hope tonight the minister might be able to give an answer that I asked him for almost five months ago as to when we may expect the introduction of a guaranteed annual income program.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I shall be very brief. Indeed, the hon. member has brought up a problem we have had the opportunity of discussing rather frequently when various bills pertaining to my department were studied here. I myself have had the opportunity of making a number of speeches on the subject outside the House, speeches to which the hon. member has kindly referred to on occasion.

May I say very simply that, at the time of the federal-provincial conference of welfare ministers, held in Ottawa from April 30 to May 1, 1975, in the opening speech which I made, and the text of which was handed to all hon. members on April 30 last, I suggested the implementation, as early as in 1976, of the part pertaining to "income support" of the guaranteed income program, which part would have resulted in effect in helping those people to whom the hon. member referred more specifically.

However, the proposition which I put to the provinces was not unanimously accepted. Some preferred to examine the issue in its minute details, and I refer the hon. member to the release published at the end of this conference which took place April 30 and May 1, 1975, a document of which hon. members have already received copies.

The government's purpose is still to complete the study of the program this year; the government would in fact be ready to start this program, at least in respect of income support, as early as next year. To achieve this, however, we need the agreement of the provinces, and I cannot assure the House that all necessary agreements will be obtained early enough to start this program as early as next year.

[English]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE—CRASH OF PANARCTIC
AIRCRAFT—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON RESUMPTIONS OF
INQUEST OR FEDERAL INQUIRY

Mr. Howard Johnston (Okanagan-Kootenay): Mr. Speaker, on October 30 last a plane crashed in the Arctic, in the darkness there, and 32 people died. That accident was long enough in the news to catch my eye and to remind me that in the Speech from the Throne, to which we had listened a month or so earlier, there had been the promise of an independent accident investigation board. It struck me that this accident was serious enough to prompt one to ask when the government would be setting up the promised investigation board, and, should the board be set up, whether this particular accident involving such a heavy loss of life, would be referred to it.

The question might have died there, and in my mind, had I not received a letter from someone who knew something about these flights to the Arctic and who was concerned that the investigation would not be extensive enough to cover all the factors involved. The letter included these lines: