

public welfare payments and we will be pleased to contribute up to 50 per cent.

The position of this government on the food issue is that basically we must provide people with an additional income and they will then make a more sensible choice of food, if they are given more information and education.

[English]

WELFARE—METHOD FOR FULFILLING PRIME MINISTER'S PROMISE OF FUEL COST ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, on November 23 I asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) what measures he proposed for the implementation of his television assurance that needy Canadians would have enough money to pay for higher priced winter fuels. I asked whether it would be by new legislation, greater federal generosity under the Canada Assistance Plan, or how. The Prime minister, in a scarcely startling reply, indicated that his statement was the direction agreed on between the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) and himself. Later the minister indicated that telegrams were being sent that very morning to provincial ministers. The announcement of care and concern and largesse was seemingly purely a federal one. This seems to be prime ministerial largesse at its most fulsome; but the execution and implementation of the gesture was to be shared with the provinces.

As with many prime ministerial grand announcements—and I think of the one of last August—the difference between the appearance and reality is vast indeed. The federal government, which in mishandling of the energy question must take primary blame among the 11 governments in this country, is not taking the heavy portion of the burden being placed upon the consumers of this country resulting from such mishandling. This is as clear as is the fact that the announcement of federal aid for fuel is not any great new breakthrough in Ottawa-based compassion. It is unfair and misleading to suggest that the announcement is a new and improved approach to assistance to needy Canadians. The Canada Assistance Plan already provides for 50-50 sharing in respect of these matters. At page 7 of the 1970-71 report of the CAP we read:

The major costs of assistance for which contributions are made under the plan are for basic requirements which are defined in the legislation as food, shelter, clothing, fuel, utilities, etc.

It declares, further:

For other budgetary items such as shelter, fuel and utilities actual costs to the recipient are generally used... The plan is designed to support the provision of assistance to any person in need whatever the cause of his need.

In many other places in the report the word "fuel" is used. It is a deplorable misrepresentation to proclaim to the Canadian citizenry that the government of Canada was accepting new responsibilities, giving new leadership or showing new concern for the plight of the needy in this country. Many months ago I suggested that in the face of soaring living costs and resultant heavier burdens for the poor, the federal government should do more under the Canada Assistance Plan. I suggested that it should increase its portion to 75 per cent from 50 per cent. This was a sound suggestion before the fuel crisis fell upon us.

### Adjournment Debate

It is all the more necessary now. Nor can I imagine that there is any province not willing or anxious to accept such a change in the structure of the Canada Assistance Plan. I would like to hear the minister's statement in this regard.

The mismanagement of the national economy by the present government has caused the twin demons of inflation and unemployment to have full play in Canada. The federal government should take its share of the efforts to mitigate the effects of inflation and unemployment upon the host of poor people in this country. It is very easy to send telegrams to the provincial governments and to restate the obvious, for example, that the CAP can be used to help the needy pay higher fuel costs. Much more meaningful and appropriate would be a new division of the financial burden. The increased fuel costs will be most hurtful in the five eastern provinces. These are the very provinces which will find it hardest to put up their 50 per cent of the cost of the Canada Assistance Plan. To ease their burden, to give more equality across the land, we need a new look and a new willingness to help. In short, we need a new formula. Telegrams and T.V. programs may seem impressive, but of themselves they will do little to help hundreds of thousands of Canadians for whom the prospects of the coming winter are bleak indeed.

I repeat my claim of months ago, a claim made by other members of this House in respect of the present emergency—that this government has put the people into it. The policies of this government should be reconsidered and should be strengthened. If the minister replies, perhaps he will give us the assurance that the delayed Bill C-211 will be brought forward immediately.

● (2210)

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of the hon. member which was an exercise just as phony as his demonstration of crocodile tears about the action the government has taken in respect of the poor in this country. His whole argument had nothing to do with the fate of the poor but, rather, the giving of more money to certain provincial governments for the running of their social assistance plans.

I can only repeat that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) in his last budget gave \$200 million in equalization payments to the provinces in need in this country. I should like to know, rather than see these crocodile tears, what the hon. member knows about what has actually happened. He might be interested to learn that, in respect of the province of Prince Edward Island, I have just received a telegram from the minister responsible indicating that this province, which the hon. member claims cannot do anything to improve the fate of the poor, has increased by 10 per cent across the board in October the social assistance payments, and that the rates are also being reviewed for further adjustment in January.

When the hon. member claims that the province cannot afford to meet its duties and responsibilities, I think he is seriously underestimating the real situation and what is happening in respect of this whole issue which he raised again in a phony way.

**Mr. Paproski:** What you say is phony.