

*The Address—Mr. Lalonde*

mons, and through the House of Commons to the government, that the social security system which the federal and provincial authorities built over the years as a patchwork job no longer meets their wishes. They see in fact in that system some elements that do not correspond to their own attitudes and their own values. They also see in it contradictions and even some confusion and, moreover, weakspots unequal to the needs the system is supposed to meet.

Therefore, we suggest that social security be acknowledged by parliament as one of the two main national priorities and that the federal and provincial governments now assume the task of studying and revising the system in a way that truly reflects the values and aims of the Canadian people.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out that the government suggested that such a study should follow five main guidelines. Such guidelines, I feel, issue from what I take to be two of the main characteristics of the Canadian people.

First of all, as pioneers and settlers in a new country, Canadians learned long ago that they were interdependent and, above all, that they had to be so in order to survive. That basic fact in the life of the first settlers bluntly confirmed the moral principle generally admitted that each individual has and must accept some responsibility as concerns the well-being of his fellow-men. Therefore in all communities, parishes and constituencies of Canada, a tradition of mutual assistance developed very early, whenever such assistance was necessary.

• (1550)

Along the years, this sense of community brotherhood broadened, and the Canadian people came to recognize their responsibility as regards welfare, not only of their neighbors within the community, but also of their fellowmen in the province where they lived as well as their fellowmen throughout the country. Therefore, there appeared a complex system of redistribution of resources, of federal-provincial equalization payments, of medicare and hospitalization plans, etc., thanks to which Canadians could contribute to a satisfying level of social welfare as well as a fair distribution of personal incomes throughout Canada.

Another characteristic of the Canadian people, I believe, is independence, that is to say, on the surface, a characteristic which seems to be opposed to the first one, but only on the surface, since independence and interdependence are basically complementary notions. No country, no nation can hope to survive without one or the other. The Canadian people as a whole are independent people. They expect to meet their own needs thanks to their own efforts. They expect as well that others will do the same. And whenever they have an opportunity to help others, they expect that everyone will bear a fair share of the burden. In modern terms, this truth means simply that Canadians expect that every person able to work will do so. They expect the government to create an economic climate that will lead to the creation of a maximum number of job opportunities. As economic productivity increases, Canadians expect also profits there of, namely increased incomes and more leisure opportunities, to be distributed fairly rather than being monopolized by a

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small number whose power enables them to do it, or by only a few people who are prepared to remain idle while others work.

I think those particular points constitute values accepted by Canadian society and they must therefore be reflected in our legislation on social security. We are quite prepared to propose to the House the reforms which may be necessary to allow the federal income security programs to reach that goal. Mr. Speaker, I am purposely using the word "reforms" because the principles mentioned in the Speech from the Throne do not mean a complete break with the past. They are compatible with what the present and previous governments hoped to accomplish, that is to say a higher degree of social justice.

However, we recognize at the same time that it would not be enough, or even acceptable to the provinces, for the Parliament of Canada to take the initiative regarding the programs and act on its own because the fact still remains that our system of social security is a responsibility shared by both the federal and provincial governments and it has always been so, with the municipalities also playing an important role in the application of the programs. Why will you ask me is it so? Why do the federal and provincial governments have major responsibilities in that field of policy? I think members of this House know very well the answer to those questions. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has already given the answer when he published the working paper on the constitution entitled "Income Security and Social Services".

So it would seem that because of that participation of federal and provincial governments in the field of social security no reform of the Canadian social security plan could be accomplished unless all components, the federal government, provincial and municipal governments, are included in the reform and the architects of the plan, the federal government and all ten provincial governments, participate equally in the development of those reforms. And it is precisely what we wish to suggest today to the House and the provinces.

It seems to me that five principles are implied, as already mentioned, in the abilities and the values of the Canadian people and they consequently should guide the federal and provincial governments throughout their study.

First, the social security scheme must ensure to the unemployable, the aged, the blind and the disabled a guaranteed annual income which is fair and human. That principle reasserts and strengthens an assumption of the social security scheme to which all governments and parties have been dedicated for half a century. Although they have different opinions on the degree of support to be provided, the Canadian people have long been conscious of their responsibilities toward those who are unable to work and gradually they have developed various pertinent programs so as to live up to those responsibilities. Old age pensions were initiated in 1927; veterans allowances in 1930; allowances to mothers without support and with dependents, that is those who at the time were called abandoned mothers, were introduced in most provinces during the thirties; pensions for the blind were introduced in 1937; the old age security system was instituted in 1951, whereas allowances to the invalid were implemented in