

Social and Economic Security

reach \$95 million in 1971. This means that during a year the rise of the GNP will be \$11 billion, while there will be fewer active workers. Indeed, several thousand Canadians able to work will not have contributed to increase the gross national product. This means that machines kept on producing. But who did this? Canadians. Let us read the statistics released by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in its September 1971 bulletin. Production in man-hours is given. In agriculture, it went up from 100, as the basic figure, to 177, in ten years. That is almost double. In industry, it went up from 100 to 140. In business, it went up from 100 to 141.

• (5:30 p.m.)

If we can increase our gross national production at such a rate, and if Canadians have contributed to that production, I submit this: Just as in a family, when together we managed to have a good crop and draw a good income, the whole family must benefit from it. Not the neighbours. One may sometimes help the neighbours in need, but first of all, one must help the members of one's own family. So, considering present conditions and the efficiency and output of the workers, we should allow the latter to enjoy the benefits of their work by increasing their purchasing power.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I will finally become convinced that the opposite is true, but I feel that it is impossible, in a country such as ours, to attempt to establish a balance between the volume of production and the money supply by way of wages. In our system, because of inventions of all kinds, that is impossible. If we stick to the old saying: If you want a share of the production, you must contribute to it through your work in order to receive a salary which will enable you to buy the goods that are produced, we are in error. I believe that we should change our way of seeing things and try to understand that this system, in the field of production, is truly efficient, and that the necessary steps should be taken to ensure a minimum income, a minimum of well-being, something which will enable anyone with guts to live a normal life.

And as explained this afternoon by the leader of the Social Credit party, the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), if some workers are able to get a large income, in the order of \$15,000, so much the better for them since the country will be none the worse for it. Instead of getting discouraged people will be given incentive to work. And in 1972, if such a system were applied, the gross national production might rise to \$120 billion.

There, Mr. Speaker, are the effects of a sound economy which would permit a normal life.

A while ago my colleague the hon. member for Témiscouata (Mr. Gendron) was talking about complex problems. Now and then he would deliberately make them more complicated. I get along well with the hon. member for Témiscouata. I respect him and I think he respects me as well. I once had evidence of this. We differ on the means to take to solve problems. However, I shall not tolerate his saying that Créditiste proposals are simplistic and demagogic. I shall not accept that. Why? Because, in my opinion, hon. members sitting on this side of the House are as serious as those sitting to the right of the Speaker. We have a role to fulfill in this place: stating

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

problems as they exist in Canada, in our areas, and trying sincerely to put forward solutions to make them disappear or at least to improve the situation.

I hesitate to say this as I bear malice towards none, but it would be hypocrisy to seek to defend a system which keeps two Canadians out of five in undeserved poverty. I am not the one who says so, Mr. Speaker, it appears in the Fifth Annual Review of the Economic Council and in the report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty in Canada, two government agencies, paid for by Canadians to seek out the causes of discontent in this country.

Any attempt to persuade the people that more cannot be done, that there is no other way, that it is quite normal for poverty to exist in the midst of affluence is a disservice to the people and if we pursue such a course we must necessarily build more prisons. We built one in Sainte-Annes-Plaines in 1969 at a cost of \$32,450 per inmate. I heard a news report this week to the effect that the upkeep of one inmate costs \$10,000 per year. Would it not be more realistic to decide on ensuring a minimum guaranteed income to people 18 years old and over, which would cost much less than maintaining inmates in prisons? They would thus be guaranteed freedom and would work towards building up the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but his time is up.

[English]

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is of extreme importance. However, I am reminded of the Niagara Falls conference in 1969 at which my party brought the question of poverty and all its implications to the public attention. At that time, when words such as "guaranteed minimum income" were mentioned, it appeared to me that the whole country became excited.

We are now facing a most important social problem and it seems to me that we need a program for an income development plan. In other words, we have to create incentives to keep people working. Let me take the example of a businessman in Hamilton who employs someone at \$100 a week. The man whom he employs wishes a raise of \$20 and the businessman says he cannot afford it: he says, "If you want to look at my books, here they are. As a result of expenses, and so forth, I cannot give you that raise". The employee says, "That's fine. If you can't afford it, I'll quit", and he goes on welfare and receives approximately \$80 a week. There is a significant point to be made here. It means that rather than a source being available to the employee which would provide the extra \$20, all he can do, because of the complexities and archaic set-up of the system, is to go on welfare and receive \$80.

We must try to develop an incentive to get people to work—particularly the unemployed, because most of them want to work. Only about 3 per cent of the unemployed will not work. Therefore, we must give them some incentive which will make them realize that it is much better to work, because when they are on social assistance they cannot improve their lot. In other words, when you make a dollar while on social assistance it is not automatically deductible. This is extremely important when you are trying to assess a particular program to eliminate one of our great social evils.