

*Family Allowances*

● (1512)

Indeed, if you look at the ethical criteria for any of the social welfare programs in the history of this country, and I look to the old Bruce commission of 1934 for the quote, the state has the right and the obligation to intervene in the economy in order "to assist individuals to realize their personal goals, their dignity and their self-esteem". That is the justification of social welfare in this country. Indeed, that is the crucial difference between charity and social security. That is the test.

To the extent that social welfare programs in this country contribute to the individual's personal goals, dignity and self-esteem, that is the extent to which we succeed. To the extent we do not, we fail the test. We talk about the principles of self esteem, dignity, and personal goals. That is the talk not only here but anywhere one wants to discuss it in this country.

I remember a line from Eldridge Cleaver who wrote the book "Soul on Ice," "If you are going to talk to talk you're going to have to walk to walk." I thought it might be helpful, it is certainly helpful to me, to take a short walk through the nation of the have-nots. Who do you find there? You find the same people. You find some old people sitting there with a lifetime of skills, a storehouse of knowledge, talent, and ways of doing things, unused, blunted by an artificial barrier. You find them sitting there so lonely.

If I could interrupt my own comment, I recall being in Peking in 1975. I had the opportunity to talk to a number of people dealing with urban affairs in that country. The first question was what were the two or three most important problems for a large urban area. We agreed that they were not transportation and housing. In fact the largest single social problem in large urban areas is loneliness. The price of that, in both economic and non-economic terms, is incalculable.

We also find in the nation of the have-nots our old friends, the lame, the halt, and the blind. They are not called that today. They are called the disabled. This country, the federal government, provincial governments, municipal governments, private corporations, and people, continue to handicap the disabled at every turn.

If you have never been disabled in an ambulatory way, think about the enormous physical effort in terms of strategy and in terms of logistics for the simple act of going to the bathroom if you are in a wheelchair.

There are about two million people in this country who are regarded as being disabled. They are often ignored and forgotten. I might add that those who are most often forgotten are the adult handicapped. The media, our institutions of learning, and most of our social voluntary organizations tend, and with good reason I am sure, to focus only on young disabled persons.

Do you know what happens to people who are paraplegics, people with ambulatory difficulties, and people with perception difficulties, who are no longer taken care of in the range of institutions which we have for young people? They do not do anything. That is what happens to them.

[Mr. Crombie.]

In December of this year there will be the first, if not in North America, certainly in Canada, paraplegic disco. A man by the name of Ben Graf is organizing that. He knows there is no place for these people to go. The incidence among these people is something we do not often hear about because it is not part of the numerology of statisticians.

A little further along the walk we find women. It is not necessary for me to deal with this in any lengthy fashion because it was dealt with so well yesterday by the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald). However, I think it is worth-while to point out that the constant debate about the rights of women is a kind of smoke screen that does not assist us.

Surely the liberation of the ability of women to proceed to a life of self-esteem, dignity, and pursuing personal goals, should not be at odds with their traditional role of being a mother and a wife.

I have two daughters. They are every bit as bright as my son. I see nothing wrong with them having the ability to be doctors, lawyers, plumbers, MPs or anything they choose, and, as well, enjoy the sorrows and pleasures of being wives and mothers. There is nothing wrong with them being twice blessed, as it were. Men, of course, have enjoyed being twice blessed since their inception.

Finally, there are the poor. In many years the poor are the other three as well. It is one thing to be old. It is another to be old and poor. It is one thing to be handicapped. It is unbelievable to be handicapped and poor. It is one thing to be a woman and deal with that role of confusion in our time, and another thing to be poor as well.

Those are the people I found in my walk through the nation of the have-nots. I am sure hon. members would add people whom they know. Most of those people have become conscript clients in a multi-million dollar social welfare system. I wish to speak about that system for a moment.

It is a system that has "grew up like Topy", put together piece by piece, in some ways brick by brick, but a bit lumpy. It is a system that has become huge, often wasteful, and increasingly incomprehensible to the people for whom the benefits are to flow. It is a system which too often offers not self-esteem but humiliation. It is a system which does not eradicate but often perpetuates the loss of individuality. Talk to your constituents and you will know it has become too often a source of a constant reminder of an assault on their sense of dignity. To put a face on it, it is a system of waiting lists.

One thing I discovered in the short time I have been in this city is that when going to the airport in order to fly back to wherever you happen to come from, you get wait-listed. I am sure all hon. members have been wait-listed. It is frustrating to want to go somewhere and do something, and not be able to get there because of forces beyond your control.

We have a system of social welfare in this country which wait-lists us. It wait-lists all of those people. It does not just wait-list them for an airplane ride home. How would hon. members feel if they were wait-listed for a home? How would