

family allowances and for those changes in the Canada Pension Plan which the provinces can agree upon. It would be our hope that the increased family allowances would come into effect in January, 1974.

It must not be thought, I should like to conclude, that the launching of a critical review such as this is a sure sign that Canada's present social security system is fundamentally unsound and in need of a total transformation, for this simply is not the case. The truth is that Canada's system is one of the most advanced in the western world and that it provides a solid foundation upon which to build in the context of today's needs. For this the present ministers of welfare are indebted to their predecessors.

It is our hope that what the government of Canada has presented in this working paper for purposes of discussion will contribute to a reasoned and sympathetic debate as to how best to provide for the security of income for all Canadians.

I need not remind hon. members that I have undertaken to have the working paper referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs where I welcome the fullest possible discussion.

We hope that this debate will not be limited to members of parliament and governments only but that voluntary organizations and the public at large will take an active part in the discussion of our proposals, as well as of any other proposals that my provincial colleagues may want to put forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41(2), I would like to table the Working Paper on Social Security in Canada, in both official languages.

● (1420)

[English]

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I want to say—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Macquarrie: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the courtesy of members on the government backbenches as I begin my remarks. I want to say that I have had a very busy hour. I have never had so much paper thrust upon me at any time since Mr. Benson launched his white paper a good many months ago. We all know what happened to that white paper and what happened to Mr. Benson.

I am glad to have had a copy of the minister's statement and of the papers, but I must say it is difficult to deal with such a vast assemblage of words in 45 minutes. I might also say that my representative was excluded from the locked-up press briefing the minister gave, a discourtesy which I did not particularly appreciate. I also understand that across the whole of the land today there will be press conferences given by representatives of the minister in various regional offices.

Mr. Bell: They are really milking it.

Mr. Macquarrie: I hope there is no lack of consideration here on two grounds, namely, that those of us who speak for the opposition do in fact speak for the majority of the

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people of Canada, and also that there is no loss of the balance between those who are government officials and those who are partisan people. This is a very serious matter and I will leave it there.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, I welcome any move which will benefit the people of Canada, far too many of whom are living on or near the jagged edge of poverty.

In separating the concrete from the vaguely projected, I salute the substantial increase in family allowances. An improvement in this area is long overdue. As a measure of income redistribution the pressing need for revision is shown by comparison with the situation in 1945 when the allowance was established. At that time payments represented 1.45 per cent of the gross national product. In 1973 the allowance represents .5 per cent, or roughly a third of what it was in the good old days of Mackenzie King, God rest his soul. Had we just kept abreast of that amount we would have had \$17.40 instead of \$8 and \$13 instead of \$6. So the figure of \$20 is not overly generous. Indeed I would repudiate anyone who would suggest that it is too much. Far from it.

I trust that the minister, although he does not quite say so, has put away that administrative monstrosity introduced in the last parliament as the FISP bill. How awkward that would have been had it come into law. We would not have had this new dawn that has been visited upon us today.

If I can speak over the chortling of the Liberal backbenchers, may I say that I think this is an important matter and not one for merriment at all. It is a matter of great concern. I said to the minister on March 1 that if he would bring in a more generous bill, one which would be less an administrative jungle than FISP, we would support it wholeheartedly and expedite its passage as much as we could, and I say so again today. We will do our best to facilitate such a measure.

In so far as I detect a genuine and general thrust toward an incentive society in the minister's statement, I cannot but agree. Indeed, if I disagreed I would be disagreeing with what my party said last October. The minister states that he has an employment strategy, and then talks of government-provided counselling and an ongoing program of community employment and socially useful activities. I read that with great care. This is an area I want to hear more about. What is this new talisman for finding work? Certainly the government has not distinguished itself up to now in the fight against unemployment. I trust that we are not at this stage dreaming up some temporary make-work programs which will give the illusion of destroying the devil of unemployment that has shadowed this country for a decade. The people of Canada deserve the opportunity to have meaningful work.

By its mishandling of the economy the government has laid far too heavy a burden on the whole welfare structure in our society, to say nothing of the terrible social costs resultant from the non-utilization of the creative capacity and ability of the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macquarrie: I for one want no part of any phony make-work projects which fail to challenge the Canadian