

Guaranteed Income

it paid dividends in the form of contentment to the elderly. It also removed people from a number of other expensive programs. Then, last October 1 the guaranteed income age was lowered to 60 and over. Anyone living in British Columbia 60 years of age and over, whose monthly income does not amount to the Mincome figure, has their income brought up to that figure, no matter how much the differential. Furthermore, the program now applies to the handicapped at age 18 and over, though there are some differences in application.

As I say, the Mincome experiment in British Columbia began with guaranteeing a monthly income of \$200. They are now adding to that \$200 the federal old age pension increases and increases in the supplement. At the present time, people over the age of 60 in British Columbia are guaranteed by the provincial government an income of not less than \$213.85 per individual, or \$427.70 per couple. In arriving at this figure, their income is counted but not their assets, such as house, bank account or other asset. These items are not taken into the calculation. About 127,000 people are now benefitting from this scheme in British Columbia, and the intent of the program is to bring security through a guaranteed income so the people in the province can live reasonably comfortably.

Lowering the age to 60 also did something else. A great many people between the age of 60 and 65, as all of us know, are finding their work a strain. They are breaking down in sickness or are trying to find other jobs. If they are not successful, they try to manage on their own pitiful revenue and wish to goodness that they were 65 years of age in order to qualify for Mincome. Now that they can qualify at age 60, this is a very great blessing to them indeed.

The program is intended to provide those who have reached the age of 60 with sufficient income on which to live. I think it is an excellent program and we would do well to watch progress in this area, though we should not wait too long. I am sick and tired of members in this chamber continuing to sit and watch misery, injustice and suffering in face of the ever-increasing cost of living, but not doing a darned thing about it. We do not need to sit and watch this kind of program indefinitely. I have been assured by all sources, governmental and those involved, that the program is working extremely well in British Columbia, and I think we should have the courage to implement it on a larger scale. The program has been directed toward the elderly and the handicapped but I think it should be extended throughout our society.

I am aware of the dangers outlined by the hon. member for Hillsborough, and this is why I do not think that the guaranteed income is the answer to all our woes. I do not think it is the panacea, the new heaven and new earth in itself that members across the way seem to think it is. I think other measures must supplement it. Mr. Reuben Baetz made it clear all along that guaranteed, worth-while employment, along with a guaranteed income, must be assured those who are young and able to work. This is something we do not have today. I say "guaranteed worth-while employment".

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway).]

● (1610)

Many young people have copped out or opted out of jobs which they find miserably deadening and in which they have no interest. Many young people, even those with university training do not wish to be a cog in an industrial machine, a servant to computers of a handmaiden to machinery of any sort. That is not worthwhile. While there are many faults to be found with the Local Initiatives Program and the Opportunities for Youth Program, they have at least pointed the way to the truth that there are many kinds of community jobs and services to people which in many ways could be carried out by young people. The young people like to perform these functions if they can find a way to live while so engaged. There should be more of that kind of job. This relates to helping the elderly, the sick, the retarded and young people in the field of sports, athletics and so on. There are a host of such things.

Along with the guaranteed income must go guaranteed productive work. If we do not provide that we will be running into what the hon. member for Hillsborough and I are afraid of; that is, the young people will sit there in an unproductive way and later we will never get them into useful activities no matter how necessary they may be. I want to see both these things go hand in hand. In addition I think they should be accompanied by a system of fair taxation. I believe we should get the dust off the Carter Report to see what he recommended, and if there are any latter-day Carters so much the better. No matter how one receives income, taxation should be applied fairly and evenly. If we had such a system we would find that some of those corporations with broad shoulders, which are now getting away with murder in respect of not carrying a fair share of taxation, would be bearing much of the taxation which today rests on the shoulders of the poor low-income people who are opposed to progress for the simple reason that they cannot stand the burden of financing it. If we had proper productivity and productive and useful work added to a guaranteed income and added to fair taxation, we would have a good start on the way to a much better way of doing things.

Now, I should like to talk about what is happening in too many Canadian homes. I think part of the picture is given in an address by Miss Sylva M. Gelber, Director, Women's Bureau of the Canada Department of Labour. She said:

There are today in Canada nearly three-quarters of a million (678,035) working women who have over one and one-third million (1,350,000) children under the age of fourteen. They are the wives of men whose families consist of one or more children under fourteen and who have a median income of less than six and one-half thousand dollars (\$6,454) per year. Or they are women without husbands as in the case of some sixty thousand (60,083) of them.

There are also today in Canada about one-third of a million (331,434) women who are the sole support of families; the vast majority (206,117) are widows. Consider with these, almost a million (925,000) single working women, and it may be fair to assume that the vast majority of women, particularly married women with young children who double their own burden by going out to work, are employed because of economic need.

These are women in the low-income groups. There are vast numbers of them. They must go out to work and neglect their homes because they cannot afford to hire babysitters or housekeepers. I suggest that if we had a