

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 30, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

LANG MAE YUR LUM REEK

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. While I have heard on many occasions during my 13 years here glowing, eloquent tributes to St. Patrick, St. George, St. David, St. Jean Baptiste before our rules gave us a holiday on that saint's day, and many other heroes, I do not recall this House ever hearing a salutatory statement to the devout and glorious patron of all the Scots, devout or otherwise, St. Andrew.

Considering that the Scots and Scottish Canadians have made a major contribution to our public life, contributing some of our greatest Prime Ministers and sharing the ancestry of others, including the present one, it is fitting, I think, that note be taken of this auspicious day. I believe that a judicious combination of two Scottish characteristics, frugality and friendliness, leads me to the formula that we might extend to one another the wish for a happy St. Andrew's day. To you in particular, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Scots here present and here represented I say, lang mae yur lum reek.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SOCIAL SECURITY

TABLING OF WHITE PAPER, "INCOME SECURITY FOR CANADIANS"—STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41 I wish to table copies in both official languages of a white paper entitled "Income Security for Canadians".

Today marks the end of the first phase of a searching examination of this important area of policy. The views of Members of Parliament, the provincial governments, the public at large and low-income groups particularly will have an important bearing on the determination of several issues of national importance.

It is my hope that agreement among all concerned will enable us to proceed with the fundamental shifts of policy emphasis and program initiatives proposed.

The sum total of these constitutes an important reorganization of the income security sector of public policy. At issue is the painstaking and complicated task of endowing with a renewed sense of purpose and social relevance, various income support policies which have

evolved through the years in specific response to particular problems. Some of the programs involved are exclusively federal and reform of them can be accomplished with relative speed. Others involve the co-operation of provincial authorities and I intend to set in motion full, detailed discussions with those authorities immediately. While the dialogue implicit in the white paper techniques must be meaningful and complete, it is essential to remember that this policy sector concerns men, women and children in permanent and temporary difficulty. They await not just our words, but our actions, and in some particular cases long delay cannot in conscience be permitted.

Our guiding principle in the paper has been to find ways to ensure the greatest possible concentration of available resources upon the people in greatest need. This has led in turn to specific consideration of relative emphasis which should in future be placed on the two, previously parallel main components of income security. First, there have been income protection measures universally available to all or most people aimed at improving their general conditions or at preventing them from falling quickly into poverty as the result of various short-term interruptions of their personal income.

Second, there have been measures aimed more directly at the low-income minority of the population whose members either cannot enter the labour force through no fault of their own or who, even when working, do not derive from certain types of work sufficient income to provide adequately for themselves and their families.

The white paper argues that it is the second group that must today engage our main attention and resources. Here are to be found the aged, mothers by themselves raising children, the physically and mentally disabled, and the so-called working poor. Put another way, here are many of the family units in Canada containing children whose health and potential for economic, social and personal development may be limited by conditions beyond their control.

• (2:10 p.m.)

It is our belief that the people of Canada will share the conviction that the claims of these people must for the next few years at least take precedence. Such agreement would result in increased emphasis on selective income support for people in need, and lessen the emphasis on universal programs.

Thus, the paper proposes strengthening an extension of the concept of providing guaranteed income support not universally but on a selective basis related to family income. Certain alternatives, major and minor, to existing universal programs will enable us to place, in the