

all groups of citizens should be helped, but if we can give even more help to those of 60, to my mind we could also help the young people indirectly. If legislation to that effect were introduced, that is to grant the old age security pension at 60, it should first of all be voluntary.

We know full well that in the case of thousands of individuals, work becomes a hardship at 60. That measure could be passed at the same time as voluntary old age security pensions at 60. This would help thousands of people and would simultaneously open extraordinary job opportunities for the young.

At the present time, our social legislation often encourages some citizens to take advantage of them instead of trying harder to get jobs. The rate of unemployment has remained quite steady in the last five or six years, but we also know that it is difficult for the young to find a full-time job.

We would then have found a formula to allow people of 60 and over to rest, to take well deserved holidays, if they so chose, because it seems that a good number of them still wish to work.

And I feel it is our responsibility to leave them this freedom. On the other hand, we are also aware that thousands of people would benefit from such an old age security scheme. In this respect, we could consider the possibility of paying more in Old Age Security Pension than we are doing at present.

I know that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) stated yesterday, in reply to the CLC, that granting the Old Age Security pension at age 60 could cost as much as \$400,000,000.

Mr. Lalonde: It would cost as much as \$1.2 billion.

Mr. La Salle: \$1.2 billion. This policy would cost over one billion, according to the figures quoted by the minister.

Now, I should like him to tell us just how much we are paying for everything connected with social welfare, for our 500,000 unemployed, how much Canadians are paying for all that, for they are the ones who must foot the bill.

If we decide to reduce appreciably the unemployment rate, it is clear that this money could easily be earmarked for old age security. I feel that any worker would be quite willing to have his taxes earmarked for old age security enabling him to take advantage of that policy rather than to have a large percentage of his taxes used solely to pay unemployment insurance or social welfare.

I think that it would be advisable to ask for an assessment of the costs of our social services, because we could, by paying the old age pension at 60, considerably reduce the unemployment rate.

Such a policy would surely contribute to the improvement of the social climate. We know perfectly well that 60-year old people would be quite happy if they were sure of getting an adequate income in their old age. There would surely not be revolutionists and we must understand that the young people who do not have adequate opportunities on the labour market are liable to criticize and to rebel against the State which does not seem to assume its responsibilities.

Guaranteed Income

I think it would be to our advantage to study this legislation as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, we are speaking about a guaranteed annual income. As stated earlier by the member for Champlain (Mr. Matte), the State must supply a guaranteed income to its citizens. If the State has obligations towards individuals I think that from the day they are born individuals also have obligations. It is no exaggeration to say that we are at least obliged to work and do something for the country. It is our responsibility to build our country and to work to the benefit of all Canadians.

It is important that the government should have repeated meetings with associations, organizations, unions, businessmen to impress upon them that if they keep on making windfall benefits they will jeopardize their future and that of the whole society. It would be useful for the government to impress upon the investors or upon big business in general that they really ought to do much more than now for people living below the poverty line. And no matter how often we are reminded that ours is a rich country with enormous natural resources, it is quite dangerous to reach an untenable situation to the extent that individuals do not get an adequate minimum income.

And if we consider, for example, the concern of mothers and fathers or of society in general about the increase in the cost of living we find that as regards food, clothing, and essential services those increases have been extremely high. Then, how about introducing legislation? In the Speech from the Throne they led us to believe that they were going to deal with some of the increases. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) made this statement recently about the increase in food prices, and I quote: "I think we have every reason to have some hopes, to be optimistic".

● (1720)

I think this is not enough, Mr. Speaker, and for that very reason I urge the government to introduce positive measures which will meet very specifically the present needs and which could remove the uneasiness now being felt.

Mr. Speaker, all the hon. members are aware of the deep concern of the Canadian people. How often, in our constituencies, have we not been told this, for instance: "What is going to happen, with this increase in the cost of living, with inflation and all the big problems we are now facing? Anyone who has seen his heating oil costs doubled, anyone who has to buy gas these days, cannot help having the government in mind once in a while.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we cannot go on like this, being told on paper that we will introduce amendments or legislation which will solve these problems. The government must therefore act quickly. Some of the government proposals should not be rejected. On this side of the House, a price freeze was advocated and the government finds justification in saying that this was tried in the United States or somewhere else and that it did not bring the expected results. However, the government is providing evidence that they do not have the answers to the present problems and, therefore, if the price freeze is not an effective measure then just let them give us the solution which will be. But one thing is sure, that is for the past four or five years if opposition parties could not