

The Address—Mr. Matte

liament could help, through the work of all its members, to maintain the growth of our beautiful Canada for the greater good of all Canadians. In addition, it will bring a ray of hope to the needy through the war on poverty already started under a Liberal government, and the speech from the throne confirms this fact.

This brings me to deal first with the economic poverty to be found within certain classes in this country; second, with the duty of government and all individuals to cope, first of all, with this serious problem; third, what has been done by the new Liberal government; and fourth, what it proposes to do in this state of war.

Although some define poverty as a purely relative fact, depending on the place and the era, to me it is the state of those who are deprived of what they need to live and to play a citizen's role in society.

Most Canadians will agree that no citizen in this country should be, through outside causes, deprived from the benefits of modern civilization. It is our social responsibility to give everybody an opportunity to enjoy a certain degree of comfort.

A great philosopher, reflecting on poverty, has concluded that a modicum of welfare is required to fulfil properly one's religious and, consequently, one's civic duties.

Although all citizens must be considered equal in the eyes of the law, a poor person's shortcomings are always more excusable. A minimum of welfare will make a man a better citizen or simply a true Canadian.

The report on rural poverty in four regions prepared and published for ARDA by the Canadian welfare council in Ottawa should give us food for thought. The discoveries made in these four countries are true, to a varying degree, of almost all the rural and urban regions of the country.

I should like to give you a summary of these conditions as seen by community leaders and by the poor families whose conception of poverty is entirely different.

The former see poverty in its overall aspect, that is, its causes and effects; in other words, they grasp the concept better. The latter define it rather in terms of their own situation and that of their neighbour.

The definition given by community leaders generally bears a close resemblance to the reasons set forth during the case survey. Here are, in order of importance, the common factors most often included by those community leaders in such a definition:

[Mr. Matte.]

Economic poverty: lack of personal income, too heavy family responsibilities, uneconomic land or farm, chronic unemployment, jobs that do not pay enough or are hard to get.

Personal or family deficiencies: inadequate schooling of children and parents, illness, poor adaptation, irresponsibility, alcoholism, lack of social participation, slums, dire poverty, debts, mentally deficient children and parents, anxiety concerning the future, little opportunity for betterment, unfulfilled desire to improve, laziness, a single trade, old age.

Social deficiencies: unemployment, insufficient school and sanitary equipment, lack of recreational organizations (especially for the young), lack of social cohesion.

The concept of poverty in the family stresses above all the difficulties it experiences: "We are not earning enough to make ends meet", "It's tough going", "We don't know what we will eat to-morrow". Elsewhere, frustrated ambition is more obvious: "We can't give our children any education", "We can't live like others do". The lack of essentials is illustrated in the two following definitions: "To be poor is to wash your clothes without soap" and "It is not to have any newspaper with which to light the stove."

Certain moral causes of poverty are expressed as follows: "He is poor because he is too lazy to work." "If So-and-So is poor, it is because he drinks too much; he often goes to the hotel". And then inadequacy steps in to explain poverty; for some "Poverty is lack of education" or "It is lack of intelligence."

Well, that is poverty. And that is what we find too often when we visit our ridings and when our electors pay us a visit.

According to the report from which I have just quoted, it was found that out of 63 families visited, 40 did not earn \$50 per week. There were also too many poor families among our agricultural classes. After having made surveys, experts came to the conclusion that a family must earn at least \$3,000 per year to be able to survive. According to the 1961 census, 23 per cent of Canadian families did not earn that amount. That is why it seems illogical to set at \$2,000 a year the basic deduction for a family.

Poverty can easily prevent an individual from being a good citizen.

Therefore, a tremendous responsibility lies with our governments which must strive for the good of every citizen and particularly of those who are most in need.