

Imagine telling him to come back in 33 years. He is an Irishman from Prince Edward Island and the rules do not permit a repetition of his remarks, but his language was explicit. I took up this matter with the department concerned and they got it down to eight and a half years through a new interpretation. That would make him 96½. Another woman wrote who had tried to get assistance. They said, you own a house, lady, and you own a car. Sell both, then come back and qualify. That is terrible. Far better the system suggested by the hon. member than these efforts to economize a little on the backs of the poor.

I think the greatest sin of the government, and it has many, is that its surrender to inflation has left on the field the poor, the aged, the people with little savings and the people with no savings, the people with fixed incomes, the people who thought they had provided for their own security, the people bereft of those who had earned for them. These are the victims of a cold, callous, insensitive government which says: inflation is a way of life, there is nothing we can do about it. There must be something we can do about it, and at another time I shall be able to tell the House and the country about some of the decisions we made when we decided down at a hotel the other day what we are going to do.

Suffice it to say I am interested in this well-presented motion. I commend the hon. member for Champlain and his party for their concern for the poor of this country. I will think increasingly about their suggestion, which contains a great deal of merit. There are some things which still trouble me, but I think he has made an important contribution to the discussion of a most pertinent subject.

[Translation]

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the members of our party rejoice in the fact that our colleagues of the Social Credit Party of Canada have decided to move this motion in the House today.

Ensuring each citizen, man or woman, each family in Canada sufficient income to meet the needs of modern life is a formidable task. Still, giving control of the means to coexist with the big industrial and financial companies that dominate and control our whole existence is the most imperative task in our times.

● (1600)

[English]

I am very glad to have this motion from those over in that corner. As a matter of fact, I know that our colleagues in the Social Credit Party have pioneered along these lines. Perhaps they do not realize that for 30 years we have had a guaranteed income in our program, and we as a party have been working steadily toward the same aim ever since that time.

For all those years we have advocated a guaranteed income. When we could not get it, we did what the people have had to do—settle for this patchwork that is involved in their social security scheme. The difference now is that while many years ago a guaranteed income seemed to be an impractical dream, today it is becoming the practical next step that must be taken to provide social security to people all across the country. It is becoming something that must be done. We are finding that the social security network that we have is overlapping in many areas and is

Guaranteed Income

wasteful. It does not reach the people who really need help and does not do a job of protecting whole groups of people who are in a very bad way indeed.

I was glad to hear my Social Credit colleague mention two features that are essential in a guaranteed income scheme. One is that it should be universal, that it should cover all groups in our society. The second is that it should not provide a disincentive for people to work. People should be encouraged to add to their income to the extent of their ability and capacity. I think both these features are very important.

As I say, I think the guaranteed income is the very next step that has to be taken in providing social security. I should like also to point out that there are three provinces where experiments along this line are now being made in a practical way. They do not embrace the whole population yet since provincial revenues are not sufficient for that. Further, it is essential to have the necessary expertise and at the start we do not have this.

May I point out that in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia experiments are being conducted in this field, and it is no accident that these are three provinces with NDP governments. They are provinces whose governments believe that, in order to plan social security, and indeed the whole economy in an intelligent and sane way today, the needs of the people must be placed in the centre of the picture and the economy must be built around them, instead of having the great corporate interests in the steel, coal and other heavy industries looking after their interests first. This sort of thing leads us into more and more trouble every day that goes by.

In the three provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia the governments have shown the courage of their democratic socialist convictions by placing human beings in the centre of government planning and public thinking. They have had the courage to experiment along these lines. Saskatchewan has just started, and so has Manitoba. As a matter of fact, Manitoba has the backing and full co-operation of the federal government. This was the only province that the federal government could find willing to go along with such an experiment. British Columbia, of course, has its own scheme. Ontario would not experiment. If that is not true, I wish the minister would contradict me; it would be the sweetest contradiction I have had in a long time.

The big, powerful and wealthy province of Ontario considered this idea, but unfortunately the idea of every man for himself, of dog eat dog, is too strong in the Ontario government for it to try any experiment in guaranteed incomes for those really in need. Obviously, they are not ready for such a program yet in Ontario. If members like the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) ever reach a majority in that government, then I imagine that within the fullness of time they will have some influence, or at least I hope they will.

In British Columbia things are moving. They have had their guaranteed minimum income assistance plan in effect for well over a year. It is known as Mincome. At first it covered all low income people 65 years and over, and guaranteed them an income of \$200 a month. These people added up their income, and Mincome brought it to \$200 a month and no less. The program was well received,