

*Alleged Non-Institution of Just Society*

some action designed to make each individual participate more fully in the economic life of his country.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, one must admit that poverty has increased in Canada. The number of poor people has increased. The number of unemployed people has reached appalling proportions. There are more than 800,000 of them.

Under the present administration, the indebtedness of Canadians has now reached incredible peaks: \$13.4 billion. Under the present administration, the indebtedness of provincial and municipal governments has become the most serious problem in Canada, with debts totalling more than \$38 billion, not counting interest paid to financiers.

As a result, it must also be recognized that national unity can only crumble, as is demonstrated by seven useless Federal-Provincial Conferences on the Constitution. Will the Constitution give food to the thousands of Canadians who are deprived of a minimum income to live on?

Mr. Speaker, even if we gave every Canadian a new Constitution, it would not solve their problem, it would not give them a guaranteed minimum income, it would not eliminate poverty in this country bursting with wealth.

Young students with their pockets full of diplomas are unemployed. This again is another sample of the results obtained with a Liberal administration. And that is only part of the sad record of our Prime Minister's administration.

Is that the just society promised by the Prime Minister? Is that the just society promised in 1968 to win votes? Is that the promised land? If that is it and if the government leaders cannot do their job, then let them move aside and we shall do it for them. If they recoil from tackling high finance, let them move aside and we shall do it for them. The federal government's first responsibility is to provide a fair distribution of the nation's wealth—and let us not forget it—of the nation's production, across the country, and also to ensure equality of opportunity for all Canadians.

This is our challenge. I suggest that the government by means of the appropriate economic and monetary measures could control inflation and unemployment provided they stop being the perfect servant and slave to high finance. But to achieve this, our travelling Prime Minister—our carrier-pigeon—should at least understand that administering Canada means staying in Canada. One cannot administer the country from abroad, between two ski meets or two cocktails, accompanied by 42 newsmen whose expenses are all paid.

In Quebec, for instance, there are more than 600,000 persons on welfare. Is that what you call a just society? To this number can be added about 20 per cent of those who work but whose standard of living is only slightly over the poverty line. Is that the just society? This is what we are experiencing in the constituency of Lot-

[Mr. Fortin.]

binrière, in Victoriaville, Warwick, Arthabasca and Princeville.

But why? Because we have a government controlled by finance which refuses to come to grips with the problem. All these people are the first to be affected in our ridings. They are the people who elected me to Parliament to say these things to the government, to make it see the light if it is still possible. All those people are the first to be affected when the cost of living goes up, because they have to spend most of their income, if not all of it, for food, clothes and shelter, which are essential to life.

If they are working, workers, farmers and others are probably not members of a union so they cannot fight effectively for salary increases as other union workers are doing. If they receive social welfare allowances, these are not adjusted to match increases in the cost of living. They are solely adjusted to their budget deficit. So the poverty level rises and the gap widens between the wealthy and the poor.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first things to do—and this is urgent—is to increase the basic personal income tax exemption. The government refuses to do so and we are blaming it for that today.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Then the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials should be abolished; it is inflationary and gives rise to an increase in the cost of housing and this prevents workers and the poorer people from owning their homes. The government refuses to repeal this tax. It says, through the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin), that it is a difficult but necessary tax. It also says: Pull in your belt! Pull in one's belt for whose benefit? Not for Canada but for high finance. Today we blame the government for not having abolished that tax.

We must have a guaranteed annual income scheme. That is another solution. For over 30 years, the Créditistes have asked that a monetary system be established which would give to every Canadian, whatever his mother-tongue, his race, his culture, whatever the provisions of the Constitution, a minimum guaranteed income, taking into account the production capabilities of the country, which are enormous. The government refuses to do it and resorts to an orgy of publicity in promising a just society. This is pure abstraction, Mr. Speaker!

We are blaming the government today for refusing to take action in this field.

On the whole, we have to adopt constructive measures, change our philosophy, stop discouraging personal initiatives. Instead of adopting restrictive, discouraging policies, why not take incentives to promote and support initiative on the part of the individual as well as of private enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, those are constructive suggestions to bring people to really participate in the economic life of Canada. This is not the policy of the present government. The present government through our carrier-pigeon Prime Minister visits foreign countries, praises—I should say gives away—our natural resources, imploring people