

to the place where we realize that if we are going to abolish poverty for those who are in it, it is going to cost us something. There may actually have to be some levelling of the living standards of our people, including our own.

We may have to come to a day when instead of making wage and salary increases always on a percentage basis, so that those at the top get a whole lot more and those at the bottom get very little, we may have to recognize there is a better way to do it. I know that my hon. friend from Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) speaks on this at times. He does not like us to talk about any levelling up of incomes because he says that means we are going to take from those that have and give it to those who have not and, in his inimitable way, he says we will end up having nothing but have-nots.

It is always enjoyable to listen to him say it, but that is one of the fallacies we have to recognize, that we cannot expect to get rid of poverty if at the same time we want to maintain the gap between the poor and the affluent, if at the same time we want to make life richer and still more bountiful for those at the top. Our concern must be not just to do something for the poor without it hurting us. Our concern must be a new order of values, a new approach to society that says that the right to a guaranteed livelihood is an essential part of living in this country.

We have criticized the Speech from the Throne for some of the rhetoric that is in it. We always do that. We always criticize the other fellow's rhetoric and then we turn around and try our best to match it. I join in the criticism of the rhetoric, but at the same time I like the phrases in the Speech from the Throne about the kind of society we ought to have, with love and compassion, and so on.

I like the sentence that is in there somewhere about our needing new attitudes and new values. Mind you, that sentence was not defined or explained, but it is there. I believe, and I hold to it very strongly, that one of the values we have got to weave into the fabric of our society is that this business of a wide gap between the poor and the rich must go and that in its place we must really concern ourselves with the economic well being of all our people—and I mean that—of all our people.

● (3:10 p.m.)

I repeat that it is not economic well-being for the poor to be given only enough welfare to keep them alive. They may stay alive on that basis, but in psychological terms they are just as poor and just as far down the ladder as was the case years ago when people had far less. I spoke in this vein during the debate on the address in reply in 1969. On that occasion I put some statistics on the record. In particular, I pointed out that approximately two decades ago 1½ million Canadians were reporting incomes of less than \$2,000 a year. Yes, conditions for them have improved. The statistics now show that approximately 1½ million Canadians are reporting incomes of less than \$3,000 a year. They are still at the bottom of the ladder. This is what has happened in two

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decades. Those people have had their position improved. The figures do not tell the story for everybody, but they suggest the picture, an increase from \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year. But \$3,000 a year today is much more serious poverty than \$2,000 a year two decades ago.

In the meantime incomes for other people have increased to \$15,000 and \$20,000. Salaries such as those are no longer surprising. I am not against people having the affluence and high standard of living that is possible today, but I accept the words of the Speech from the Throne that we need a new scale of values. I want those at the bottom to be brought up first.

If we are going to talk about human dignity we need a determination of national resolve, not just that we are going to help the poor, but that we are going to get rid of poverty even if it means that we have to curb some of the higher incomes and adopt a policy of narrowing that gap, helping those at the bottom rather than just having an increase on a percentage scale for everyone.

A few moments ago, I alluded to the world's situation. I think the same holds true there. Our international life will not hold together if we try to go on much longer with two thirds of the world's population hungry and one third enjoying relative affluence. The same is true for our country.

We must apply ourselves to the task of using the great wealth we are able to produce, not for a hierarchical standard of living, but for a good standard of living for all our people. As a matter of fact, that idea is in the Speech from the Throne. It has to be read carefully and between the lines to find that idea, but it is there, for the Speech from the Throne does say that we must use our capacity for production of wealth to produce as much as we can, but we must see to it that that wealth, having been produced, gets through to all our people.

There is a suggestion that there will be legislation in the field of income maintenance to meet that goal. That is good. I am glad I am not preaching to the unconverted. I am glad to know there are people who share with me in philosophical terms this notion I am now trying to spell out, namely that our job in the seventies is not to raise the incomes of those people earning \$3,000 to \$4,000 while the upper limits increase to \$40,000 to \$50,000. Our job is to achieve a greater approach to equality. Our job is to achieve the kind of society in which we accept the principle that a guaranteed livelihood is a natural right of every person in this country.

I recognize the fact that it will take time to reach this goal, but it may not take as long as some people think. I remember being told when I first came here that some of the things I advocated were idealistic but could never be achieved. They have been achieved. I have seen the elimination of the means test from the basic old age pension. I have seen hospitalization and medicare and other things of that sort enacted in this place. It may be that for no other reason than sheer necessity we will get to a guaranteed income for all Canadians sooner than some people think. But it will only come if we make it a high national resolve.