

"support the efforts made by this government or any future government to better meet the needs of those Canadians who experience hardship, and try to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor." This government has done many things. One thing it has not done is narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. It is a Liberal myth which they have preached assiduously, that they have narrowed the gap between the rich and the poor.

When the minister spoke the other night, she tried to create that same impression. I am not as enthused about the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) as my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. However, I look upon her as being probably the only liberal in the so-called Liberal cabinet.

The minister has made a number of good speeches dealing with the question of poverty. I want to quote a couple of sentences from a speech she made last May to the YMCA. I quote:

—nearly 2 million children who live in families with incomes inadequate for their needs and for the 600,000 working families who spend two thirds or more of their incomes to provide the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. . . . In 1977, the poorest 20 per cent of Canadian families received less than 6 per cent of total Canadian family income while the richest 20 per cent of Canadian families received 40 per cent of all the income. These figures are, unfortunately, very stable. The share of income going to our poor families has scarcely changed since the end of the second world war.

That was a statement of fact which the minister made last May. What happened the other day? I suppose she was responding to the attacks and criticism of her and the government by the lead spokesman for the official opposition, the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). I ask the minister to think about the difference between her May speech and what she said the other night about the hon. member for St. John's East. She said, and I quote:

He did not tell Canadians that it is not fashionable to talk about poverty today because there is no longer visible, flagrant poverty in Canada. People no longer really suffer from malnutrition as they did when I was a teacher 20 year ago. People no longer suffer from the effects of unacceptable housing conditions. Poverty is far more difficult to fight. It is far more difficult to sell to Canadians the fact that poverty should be put on the map of urgent problems to tackle because it has gone underground and has become less apparent.

She went on to suggest that because the standard of living in Canada had increased by 25 per cent in the last ten years, we do not have to worry about it. The minister knows better. The facts disprove everything she said the other night.

According to Statistics Canada, in 1968 a very substantial number of people were living in poverty. In its fifth annual review in 1968, the Economic Council of Canada stated, that based on figures from the 1961 and 1965 census, 20 per cent of all Canadians were living below the poverty line.

The most recent figures we have are for 1976. According to Statistics Canada figures for 1975-76, 11.8 per cent of all families and 38.1 per cent of unattached individuals in Canada were living below the poverty line. In other words, 19 per cent of all Canadians were living below the poverty line in 1975-76.

If anyone doubts the figures of Statistics Canada, I want to put on record figures published by the OECD. They show that in the early 1970s, using a standardized definition, 8 per cent

Family Allowances

of the population in Australia were living in poverty, 16 per cent in France, 3 per cent in Germany, 5 per cent in Norway, 3½ per cent in Sweden, 7½ per cent in the United Kingdom, 13 per cent in the United States and 11 per cent in Canada.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare represents a constituency in the metropolitan Montreal area, as does the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lachance) who suggested yesterday there is little if any poverty in Canada. I was interested in an article which appeared in *Canadian Magazine*, in June, 1975, dealing with some of the problems that exist in the city of Montreal.

Before putting any facts or figures on the record, I want to make it clear that I do not suggest that Montreal is any different from or any worse than other cities in Canada. In my own city of Winnipeg the situation of the native people, who are increasing in number every year and now make up an appreciable percentage of the population of metropolitan Winnipeg, is a disgrace. A large majority of them live in real poverty.

I want to put on record for the information of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the problems which exist in her city of Montreal. The minister was somewhat glib, uncaring, and unnoticing of the situation in her speech the other night. I quote from the article which appeared in the *Canadian Magazine* in 1975:

In Canada it's estimated that 25 per cent of all children live in poverty. In the city of Montreal, the figure is 46 per cent, almost double the national average. . . . 15,000 dwelling units don't have hot water. In 10,625 homes, people live without a bathtub or shower. Inadequate heating or faulty wiring cause at least ten fires a week. . . . The types of lives people lead show in the health statistics. The death rate in the slums of St. Jacques, in central Montreal, is fully twice that of the city as a whole.

I wish the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice were here to hear the statistics. Maybe he could explain how, under a Liberal government, that kind of situation could exist in the city of Montreal, part of which he represents.

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The article goes on to say that in greater Montreal just under one quarter of the children under 15 can be classed as poor. In the actual centre of Montreal the figure rises to 46 per cent, almost double.

Then, in a report published by the National Council of Welfare in 1975, entitled "Poor Kids" I came across the following description of poverty:

We find the greatest number and higher proportion of poor kids live in rural areas of less than 1,000 population.

The report states that there are more than 500,000 children living in poverty in the province of Quebec and that the percentage of the total number in the province living in poverty is 28.1. The report goes on to speak about the St. Catharines school in a low income neighbourhood in Montreal's east end, where it found the following situation: 21.3 per cent of the children were inadequately nourished, 22 per cent were retarded in height and weight development, 30 per cent had a history of diabetes, and 20 per cent had a family history