

Guaranteed Minimum Income

The Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote:

I wish to congratulate the hon. member for his interest and concern in the grave problem of poverty in Canada and the improvement of assistance and welfare administration... I do want to congratulate him most sincerely upon his interest in the problem and for placing the matter before the House.

For his part, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the hon. member for Parkdale (Mr. Haidasz) said, and I quote:

I welcome the opportunity extended to us to take part in a debate on a guaranteed minimum income for Canadians. I should like to compliment both the hon. member for Portneuf (Mr. Godin) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) on their contributions to this debate.

Fortunately, on April 6, 1970, three members of this house spoke again about a guaranteed minimum income, and expressed various views as to the problem and the difficulty of solving it, to start with the quasi-impossibility of isolating the problem and even of defining it, for the needs of the study.

Of course, I am happy to thank the honourable members for Oshawa-Whitby, Lanark and Renfrew and Scarborough West (Messrs. Broadbent, McBride and Weatherhead), for having opened the debate this year, thus allowing me to go straight to the point and to give some details and solutions concerning an individual guaranteed income.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government is always ready to make gifts to some developing countries. Such action, repeated regularly enough, has a two fold purpose: First, to help the recipient country; secondly, to keep our industries going since with those gifts, foreign countries buy more from Canada.

If gifts to foreign countries contribute to the progress of our national economy, all the more would gifts to Canadians have the same results, affording at the same time a little comfort to families.

If new gifts promote the development of foreign countries, let us allow our own people to take advantage of the same methods.

Mr. Speaker, in order to give a new impetus to the national economy, I take the liberty of suggesting the amount of the gifts that will have to be made to all Canadians without income, namely \$30 a month to all youngsters, from birth up to 12 years old, \$60 a month to all students from 12 to 18 years of age, and \$100 a month to all other citizens without any income, including mothers.

All hon. members who understand the meaning of the gifts to foreign countries will recognize that the gift approach is the only method which can so far ensure that a minimum income is paid without resulting in an increase in taxes, prices, or the cost of living, both for individuals and companies.

This method alone under which a purchasing power is guaranteed to the unemployed without any other source of income can replace, in my view, all family and personal allowances programs, as well as the Canada and the Quebec pensions plans, including the welfare allowances which have become as expensive as they are disgraceful.

The people who produce the national wealth have the right to tell the ministers and their elected representatives how to distribute production in the interests of all Canadian citizens, and not only to ensure superabundance to a few, to the prejudice of others who lack the necessities of life.

In short, Mr. Speaker, I dare hope that all hon. members who wish to better the lot of their constituents will give me their support.

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think that I can give satisfaction to the hon. member for Portneuf (Mr. Godin), who hopes that several members will support him. In fact I am one of those who will support him.

I believe that the need for a guaranteed income system was felt in Canada for many years. However, let me tell you that the motion of the hon. member for Portneuf has a serious weakness, since it purports to restrict the guaranteed minimum income allowances to the unemployed Canadian citizens. Therefore, such a system would not apply to the poor workers, no more than the existing welfare programs. It would be almost identical to the present programs based on a means test.

Mr. Speaker, the tremendous economic growth experienced by Canada after the second world war could leave many people under the impression that as our gross national product would increase, the problem of poverty would gradually lose its importance. However, the facts have shown the contrary.

The real per capita revenue has increased noticeably, but a good number of the people have not benefited enough to get rid of poverty. The affluent society is more and more conspicuous for the poor, but the rich, to a great extent, remain unmoved by the predicament of the poor.