

longer able to do so. So where private enterprise chooses not to go, the state, under its welfare approach, has to go. So we built housing for these people, inadequate as it may be. We have to build housing for them. So their real condition in relation to their fellow citizens has not changed for the better; indeed, it has probably changed for the worse. They are in the same market place except that in the market place those who used to be able to muscle them out before can muscle them out to an even greater degree now because they simply have more money to spend.

A few days ago there was the beginning of a debate in the press of this country when it was revealed that wage earners had not only failed to advance their position over the past year but had been able to do less than hold their own against rising prices. Immediately after that, information was produced to negate the statement. We were told that the total disposable income in this country, after taxes have been taken into consideration, and after the rate of inflation has been deducted, has gone up by 6.2 per cent. Was that not good news, we were asked. Of course, it was good news but the logic of the situation must stare us in the face. If the wage earners as a class have not moved ahead but have slipped backward, and if we as a total group of Canadians have moved ahead by 6.2 per cent in real disposable income, then it means that certain groups in this country have gone ahead by much more than 6.2 per cent.

So, here we go again. We are not moving toward a state of better and more fair distribution of income but quite the opposite. This is why I urge the minister not to buy the kind of policy which entails an argument as to whether the working poor are getting as much as people on social benefits. Let us forget that argument; it is not an important one. Let us ask ourselves whether both of these groups are getting their fair share of the national pie and, at the very least, let us not get involved in a program which will allow the provinces to effectively dispose of the increase in family allowances in such a way that people who are both in the working poor group and welfare recipient group are not to benefit in any significant way.

The distribution of income in our country, as I have been stating, is obviously not good. It is alarmingly bad. But some of us are probably inclined to take comfort from the fact that we are not as badly off here in Canada as others are in other areas of the world. For example, there is an editorial in the *Globe and Mail* of Thursday, September 27, which is signalled by the usual archness of *Globe and Mail* editorials, which deals with upgrading foreign aid. It reads in part:

The past 10 years of economic development have in fact left 800 million people relatively worse off than they were before. The upper 40 per cent of the population of developing countries typically gets 75 per cent of the national income, while the lowest 20 per cent gets 5 per cent.

I am sure that many of us reading this editorial would have shaken our heads in dismay. What a sad state of affairs! In the developing countries, 40 per cent of the population gets 75 per cent of the national income, leaving 25 per cent to be distributed with generosity and largesse to the remaining 60 per cent. I am sure that on looking at these figures we took some comfort from the fact that such was not the situation in Canada. I am sorry to have to

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report to you, Mr. Speaker, that these are the facts in Canada; indeed, they are exactly so in Canada. If you consider the income received by individuals who are earning the income of the top 40 per cent, you will find that they get, according to the 1971 figures, 75.2 per cent of the national income. So here we are lecturing the developing countries about their unequal distribution of income, whereas the situation in our country is exactly the same as the one which we condemn in developing countries. In terms of the distribution of income, we are a developing country. We have an extremely long way to go. I know I have quoted figures that only go back over the past few years. I could go as far back as 1951 and demonstrate that the situation then was pretty much the same, except for one year or two when the situation really became disastrous, and that was in 1960 and 1961. Those were the infamous years when there was no real gain, as a matter of fact, a loss in total income for Canadians, years in which there was inflation as well. So I do not think it is a matter of singling out which party did what when. The record has not been good.

Again, I must refer to the province of Ontario to try to discover why our record has been so bad. From the beginning of this confederation and before, we have always had an extremely niggardly outlook regarding the poor. In the old days they used to be called, not the poor or the unemployable welfare recipients, but the sturdy beggars; this was the term used. We used to ask ourselves: what shall we do with the sturdy beggars in our society, people who beg but are strong enough to work? We have always been so concerned with the little dollars and cents that may go to the wrong person who may not be totally deserving, these people who, according to certain people in our society, actually populate vast areas of our cities. These people are always to be seen on a Saturday afternoon on the back stoop with a case of beer, doing nothing else but watching television. We have always been so concerned with this that we have failed to tackle the main problem which is that we have an extremely unjust society and there is nothing that has happened in the past three or four years to indicate that it will become just.

I am suggesting this afternoon that unless measures are taken to provide for the adequate distribution of family allowances there will be no change of any significance in terms of the distribution of income in our society. This program is one which I will support in principle. I certainly hope to correct it in detail, but I will support it in principle because it can be a step towards greater social and economic equality in this country. But I would like to remind the minister that this is a step, and only a very small step.

● (1600)

If the governments of this country, the federal government and the provincial governments, were really concerned with the working poor they would do something about the minimum wage. Why should it be that a man who works needs to have some kind of supplement from the state for his income? I know such proposals are entailed in the discussions that are going on at the federal-provincial level, and that somehow a way will be found to supplement the incomes of the working poor. There are great numbers of working poor in this country. In my city