

*Inquiries of the Ministry***THE CANADIAN ECONOMY****USE OF NET SOCIAL BENEFIT RATHER THAN GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT AS INDICATOR OF PROGRESS**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Prime Minister arising out of his speech in Vancouver in which he suggested that we should place less reliance upon the gross national product and replace it with a more revealing figure, a new statistic which might be called "net social benefit". I wish to ask the Prime Minister whether the government is preparing such an index for determining progress and development in this country, and have instructions gone to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to set up the machinery for producing such a criterion?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in a general sense the answer is yes, of course. When the government makes economic decisions, it always tries to put into the balance the social effects of its decisions and not only the economic effects. We do this every time we make a decision. I hope it is not a new notion to the hon. member. I can recall that more than 25 years ago economists were telling us about net national benefit. Apparently it was a surprise to some members of the press too. It is not a new motion. It is one which is very much in the mind of this government and has been for some years.

As to the second part of the question, whether it could be the subject of instructions to the Bureau of Statistics, the answer is that this is a very difficult suggestion. We do not think that the Bureau of Statistics is the source empowered in Canada to decide social or human benefit. This is the business of the government and, I hope, of the opposition. I am glad they are discovering this even though they are some 25 years late.

Mr. Baldwin: Can you seasonally adjust it?

Mr. Douglas: No one is quarrelling with the idea of having a measure of special progress and social benefit. What I am asking the Prime Minister is whether this is to be merely a nebulous hypothesis which the government uses from time to time—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Douglas:—or whether the government is prepared to produce in some statistical form the net social benefit and whether items like unemployment and pollution will be factors which will be contained in such an index?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest that the supplementary question, and to some extent the answer given by the Prime Minister, is more in the field of debate. Perhaps the matter might be considered on an occasion other than during the question period.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question to the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Speaker.]

[English]

Does the term "net social benefit" come from the economist Keynes, Samuelson or Eric Kierans?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Later:]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): My question is supplementary to one asked earlier by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands. I think I understood the Prime Minister to say that consideration was given to social benefit in government decisions. In view of the drop in net farm income by over \$500 million since he became Prime Minister, was due consideration given to social benefit in the programs of the government on agriculture?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I should point out first that I did not use the term "social benefit" in my speech. I said "human benefit", but I cannot blame hon. members for believing what they have read in the newspapers. With regard to the second point, the answer is yes. Of course there has been a vast increase in social benefits to all Canadians as a result of many of this government's welfare measures.

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FAMILY ALLOWANCES**INQUIRY AS TO INTERIM INCREASE**

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): My question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that family allowances will not be increased in September, is the minister or the cabinet considering any interim increase to help needy families?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): No, Mr. Speaker, that is not under consideration. As I indicated, we are now having discussions and weighing various proposals for changes in family allowances which have been submitted by the general public, interested organizations and the provinces. We hope to use this as a basis to introduce legislation later in the fall.

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HEALTH**INQUIRY AS TO STATEMENT ON BIRTH CONTROL**

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I wish to direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the question just asked, when will he be making his statement on birth control and contraception?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): I hope to do that tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.