

provide the capital that we so urgently need in Canada. The insufficiency of capital invites outsiders to walk in, to fill the vacuum and to take over more and more of Canadian industry, something about which there was a great deal of complaint in the house today and during the past weeks.

● (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, if I may take the liberty of putting the motion of the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) in my own words, it says that there is too much poverty in Canada, and too many of our people do not get their share of the abundance that we in Canada are able to produce. I agree with that statement. The only thing wrong with it is that it is an understatement, in fact the understatement of the year.

Before I go further perhaps I should do the usual thing and make it clear that I do not agree with the theories and solutions that are proposed by the hon. member for Témiscamingue, but I think that is beside the point so far as today's debate is concerned. Whether we agree or not with the political theories of our friends to our geographical left, I think they are to be commended for calling upon us today to consider the disgrace of the poverty and the inequalities that exist in Canada in 1969.

I listened with interest to the speech of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand). I was hoping that he might say something by way of an answer to the problems set out by the hon. member for Témiscamingue, but about all he did was to characterize the hon. member as a demagogic orator. Having said that, he followed in the same pattern. Talk about demagoguery attacking demagoguery—we had it this afternoon. The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion described the hon. member for Témiscamingue as one who was apparently making a speech before an audience rather than a speech in the House of Commons, and then he himself did the same thing. He said that it is easy to talk about poverty and to get the poor to agree with you, but I suggest to the minister that one cannot dismiss the problem of poverty by calling it demagoguery to talk about it.

There are times when it seems to me that we who operate in the beautiful surroundings of Parliament Hill and enjoy the comfort of living in certain parts of Ottawa get a little too far removed from the reality of poverty

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as it is experienced by far too many Canadians. If you start to think of Canadian poverty, I am not quite sure where you begin. There is life as some Canadians have to live it in the outports of Newfoundland or in the fishing villages on the south shore of Nova Scotia. There is life in Campbellton, New Brunswick, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) saw it over the weekend, or at least he was photographed in its midst. There is the life that families live in tarpaper shacks in parts of Quebec and Ontario with the result that every winter we learn of many of them losing their lives by fire. There is the life in poverty or close to it that many of our 250,000 Indians experience in Canada. There is the problem of people who live in the blighted or slum areas of our cities from one end of Canada to the other. There is the poverty of children who receive education, particularly in some of our rural areas, far below the standard available in some other areas and far below the requirements of life today. There is the plight of our pensioners, and in a moment or two I shall come around to that matter again because a good deal of what I want to say on this motion revolves around the plight of our pensioners. There is the situation faced by many of our veterans, particularly those who are struggling to get by on the war veterans allowance while we wait for the Woods report, which does not even touch the war veterans allowance, to be referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

But even after one has tried to face up to the poverty that exists in this country which we associate with people on welfare of various kinds, I think we need to remind ourselves that perhaps the greatest area of poverty is amongst what are known as the working poor. The Economic Council of Canada has done some studies in this area. As a matter of fact, the council has been making representations to one of the committees of the other place where it has been brought out in recent days that there are over 900,000 and perhaps one million families in Canada whose economic condition is below the poverty line. The poverty line as defined varies between families of several people and families of only two or three people, while another figure altogether is given for individuals. At any rate, the estimate of the Economic Council of Canada is that there are nearly one million families, perhaps four million or five million people in Canada, who are existing below today's poverty line.