

Guaranteed Income

In 1967, this amount had increased to \$6.7 billion. In 1971, the debts of Canadians amounted to \$11.7 billion, and as of December 31, 1973, the consumer debt had reached \$17,694 million.

The enormous accumulation of the private debt shows without any doubt the chronic lack of purchasing power of the consumer who must run into debt in order to buy the food products he needs.

The Social Creditors are not the only ones to stress this fact. During a conference in 1966, a world famous economist, Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, warned that the present industrial system, and I quote:

... cannot ensure that the purchasing power in the economy will be equal or even approximately equal to the products that can be manufactured through present industrial methods.

A universal guaranteed annual income paid with new credits would contribute to increase the purchasing power of the people and bring it to the level of production. Instead of mortgaging their future incomes, people would be able to purchase with today's money the products that they need today, thus checking the staggering rise in the consumer debt, which has quadrupled in less than 10 years.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles)—Social Security—Possibility of production of cost of living index related to goods and services purchased by pensioners; the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard)—Health—Request for assurance medical research funds will not be reduced.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58 IS SUGGESTED ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINIMUM ANNUAL GUARANTEED INCOME PROGRAM

The House resumed debate on the motion of Mr. Matte (Champlain).

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to discuss the motion proposed by the Social Credit Party of Canada, which reads as follows:

That this House regrets that the government has taken no concrete steps to ensure the establishment of a guaranteed minimum annual

[Mr. Boisvert.]

income to overcome poverty in Canada and enable each Canadian citizen to cope with problems of rising prices and to fight inflation efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the problems facing us every day not only in the province of Quebec but throughout the country can never be overemphasized. We know it full well, right after a fantastic congress where we had the opportunity to listen to the representatives of about 2,000 delegates who came to explain those general problems—

Mr. Lefebvre: Were you there last year?

Mr. La Salle: No, Mr. Speaker, I was not there last year but I was very interested to know the views of citizens from all parts of the country.

My friends opposite understand very well what I mean. The views expressed today have convinced us that the problems set forth by the Social Credit Party of Canada affect the whole country.

For those reasons, it is obvious that the motion before us is surely worth discussing, and I hope that after hearing our repeated remarks in this House, the government will understand that those problems are serious. I think it has already been realized that they are serious and that the words will be followed by concrete action.

● (1710)

A few minutes ago, the program of welfare allowances was said to be acceptable to the government.

Mr. Speaker, I think the government has presented many measures. In view of the increase in the cost of living and the difficulties we face, we must admit that the government, even if it has made efforts and come up with some improvements, has provided for increases in some programs. Even if the increase in the cost of living has been much more rapid than the rise in benefits, I am very happy to say that, however inadequate, improvements have been made. Repeating that the government has taken no action is not fair, but it is not fair either to say it has taken concrete action.

The motion now before us allows us to remind the government that its measures are insufficient.

The unemployment insurance program was mentioned earlier. The provision of an annual guaranteed income could alleviate the difficulties we are now having with the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the frequent embarrassment of the recipients. If the guaranteed minimum income program were adopted, there could be tremendous advantages and changes for the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to deal with a subject dear to me, the eligibility for old age security at 60 years of age. I think it can be discussed in the debate on the motion now before us, since it concerns a form of annual income for 65 year old people.

Yesterday, I learned that an NDP member had spoken of the importance of that measure.

With regard to the guaranteed annual income, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), in reply to the responsible minister, said that all categories of citizens should be helped. I agree with the minister that