

Welfare and Income Security

conditions mentioned by the Parliamentary Secretary in his remarks?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion is withdrawn.

Order discharged and motion withdrawn.

* * *

HEALTH AND WELFARE**WELFARE AND INCOME SECURITY—REPORT OF
DR. J. W. WILLARD**

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre) moved:

That an Order of the House do issue for a copy of any reports or reviews with regard to social welfare legislation and income security prepared by or under the direction of Dr. J. W. Willard, Deputy Minister of Welfare for Canada, since June 25, 1968.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the material which is the subject of this resolution and that is why I sometimes refer to it as the Willard report and sometimes as the Willard reports. That is not a matter of consequence but I thought it might be useful to indicate that whichever term we use, singular or plural, we are talking about the same material.

The Willard report, as I understand it, is a document prepared either by or under the direction of Dr. J. W. Willard, deputy minister of welfare for Canada, on the question of social security, perhaps social welfare, perhaps income maintenance, and other related questions. It is some time since that report was prepared. We did learn that it was in the process of preparation, and a couple of years ago the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) indicated that consideration was being given to the tabling of that report when it was completed. After a time that tune was changed. We were told that we would not get the Willard report as such but that we would get a white paper based on it. That promise was very definite. Indeed we were told that we would get that white paper before the last session ended. The session ended and we did not get the white paper. We have been told in this session that we are still going to get a white paper, that it will not be the same white paper that we did not get last session but that it will cover some of the same ground.

It is not my purpose in these few remarks to be as provocative as these few sentences I have uttered may suggest. We can save that for other occasions. I should add that what we are most interested in is the legislation that will arise out of this whole study, whether we are talking about the Willard report or about the white paper based thereon. But it does seem to me that a pretty fundamental issue is involved in this motion, and I make an earnest appeal to the government that it reverse its decision of last year and that it agree now to make the Willard report public. This government has had a great deal to say about participatory democracy. It has declared that its aim is to get the people of Canada involved in the decision making process. It has set up Information Canada which is supposed to be established for the purpose of getting information through to the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

people of this country. In fact, some ministers on the other side of the House have declared openly that they think the stance that has been taken in the past—and which is still taken—that no government document or material is to be produced unless there is a clear case for it should be changed. This means that a great deal of government material never sees the light of day. As I said, there are many ministers who say that the reverse should be the position, namely, that every government document should be made public unless there is a good case for not doing so.

In the field of social security, pensions, welfare and income maintenance we have a subject that is extremely important. I do not deny for a minute that I have some ideas in this field. Some people might even think I have some prejudices that I press time after time. But even though I admit that, I insist that in the decade of the seventies we have got to do some real sorting out of the whole question of income levels and the relationship of social security legislation to our economy as a whole. We have got to take a good, hard look at all of our income programs, whether they apply to income from earnings or income from social security programs.

● (5:10 p.m.)

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that if the government has used public funds and has put such an eminent civil servant as Dr. Willard to work on this whole question, the material he has produced should not be withheld from the people of Canada. I know of Dr. Willard's work well enough to know that whether his conclusions agree with mine or not, which after all does not matter, in his report there will be abundant material that would be useful to the parliament and to the people of Canada in grappling with this whole broad question of income levels, income maintenance and social security.

An hon. Member: The guaranteed annual income.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Yes, the guaranteed annual income is something that comes into it and, as I say, I am speaking in a very restrained manner this afternoon because I do not believe that this is the time to get into the particular social security changes that I want to see developed. There are plenty of opportunities to do that, but rather I am basing my case for this motion on the fundamental proposition that here in the Willard Report is a mass of material, a mass of information that I am sure would be useful to the people of Canada, and would be useful to us now, not when it is let out of the archives 25 or 30 years hence. It has been paid for by the people of Canada, and I think we ought to have it.

I have no sympathy for the argument that the government probably has, even though it will not put it forward, that it will embarrass the government if it produces this report and then comes down with legislation that does not go along with what is suggested in the report. Surely we are big enough not to take that approach.

If Dr. Willard's studies were to be valuable they had to be done on a broad basis without just suggesting this or that particular program. There had to be an examination of the whole question of income levels and social securi-