

*Government Orders*

that we study, analyse and revisit our social programs, our income support and income replacement programs. However I want to remind the House and the minister that there are some things we should keep in mind. We will encounter serious difficulties in doing this examination of our social security system.

● (1010)

I want to remind the House that this was done with some intensity in the 1970s when the Hon. Marc Lalonde was the Minister of National Health and Welfare. A very serious attempt was made to rationalize and bring up to date our social security system. While some good improvements were made at that time, some of the simplistic approaches that were first suggested were found not to be workable.

We have different types of social security systems. We have those where the payment is universal and comes out of our general tax revenue, for example the old age security system. We all pay into it in varying degrees through our progressive tax system but at age 65 we all receive the same payment no matter what our income is. On top of that we have the guaranteed income supplement which pays additional amounts to people who do not have other sources of income, who do not have private pensions or RRSPs or whatever. That is one kind of social security support system where the payment is the same to all individuals. I am talking about old age security which is paid for through the general tax system.

We have other types of programs such as unemployment insurance and the Canada assistance plan. Depending on our income we pay in varying amounts. If we have lower incomes we pay in less. If we have higher incomes we pay in more. When we collect we receive more if we have paid in more and we collect less if we have paid in less.

The principle behind it makes sense. The highly skilled worker who pays the top premium because he has a higher income will have made commitments and entered into debt for homes, cars, household appliances. When unemployed he still has to meet those higher commitments so he gets a higher payment. But he has been paying in at a higher rate.

It is the same with the Canada pension plan. If we have paid in at a higher rate we get a higher payment at the end but it is usually because we have been living at a higher standard of living. Usually the rent, mortgage and other payments are higher and when we retire or are unemployed we need that.

When they tried to rationalize all these systems back in the 1970s they found that to put together a flat payment system with the systems that were based on varying contributions and

varying payments was not an easy task. As a matter of fact they were not able to do it. I bring that to the attention of the House.

Some programs are geared to meet the types of debt and commitment we have made while we are working. When we become unemployed or when we retire or when we are forced to leave work because of injury or disability we need payments that will meet that type of commitment.

For example we do not want skilled workers to have to sell their homes simply because they are unemployed or because they are retired. To suggest we should have one payment for everybody no matter what they have been doing when they were working does not make sense. It could drive a lot of people into poverty and that is not what we want to do.

I want to refer also to the unemployment insurance system. There has been some suggestion that, and I do not know whether it goes that far, in order to collect unemployment insurance one should be obliged to participate in training programs or in some type of community work or whatever.

First let us deal with the training programs. It is a fact that a good number of our unemployed are highly trained already. They are skilled. They are machinists, electricians, architects, professional people and trades people with highly skilled trades. Their problem is not training, it is the lack of jobs. To suggest the solution to all our problems is to simply retrain or upgrade everybody is not correct.

● (1015)

It is true a large number of people cannot find work because their trades are out of date or they have no trade whatsoever or they are illiterate. Those are the people we have to train and make competitive with the people in the United States, Europe, Japan. I fully support that. However, let us not overdo it and suggest that the total solution is to retrain everybody. Many people come to my office and probably to my colleague's office every day who are trained but their problem is jobs, not training.

We hear another suggestion on the street. It is terrible these people are on unemployment insurance and they should be made to do some kind of work until they get a job. One of the major tasks of the unemployed person is to look for work. It is a time consuming undertaking. If unemployed people are serious, and most of them are, they spend a lot of time going for interviews, searching the newspapers and writing letters. They want to get back to work in the field in which they are competent.

Let us be careful so that this sort of work fair is not overdone. To put to work or in training programs as a condition for receiving benefits certain young people who are in good health but have no training is fine, but let us be very careful that we do not overdo it.