

Income Tax Act

But no. The government says: We are going to deal with the poor and provide a basic exemption of \$1,500 for a single person. In order to demonstrate to what extent this is sad and ridiculous, let us consider the case of a student who wins a scholarship of \$1,500 and who sweats it out all summer and earns an additional amount of \$500 to be somewhat better off the rest of the year. He would have, in the first place, to pay taxes on these \$500. His scholarship being considered as an income he would have also to pay the relevant tax, which is absolutely ridiculous.

It means also that individual efforts to manage one's business are being discouraged. When you read the Treasury Board's pamphlet entitled "How is your tax dollar spent?", you find a beautiful coloured chart, since the government sees poverty in colours as does Mr. Castonguay in Quebec. This chart shows that 25 cents of each tax dollar are spent on social security. Why is that?

What are these social security measures for? They systematically create poverty.

I mentioned yesterday in the House, the eighth annual review of the Economic Council of Canada wherein it is said that of the 301,000 Canadians who have been following courses, 78 per cent of them have been unable to increase their income. What purpose do these courses, which cost millions of dollars, serve in the end? They are nothing but a social welfare measure.

Mr. Chairman, social security measures now cost us tremendous amounts of money and they do not stamp out poverty; on the contrary, they generate it. The government will reply that this is not true. If it is not, then let it prove that it is seriously fighting poverty and let it increase the basic exemptions.

I challenge the members opposite and all other members to think of and name a single member of their electorate who is able to live in decent affluence on a \$3,000 a year income. Let them name a single Canadian citizen who can do it!

• (4:20 p.m.)

Yet, Mr. Chairman, I know several persons who do it. Several of my colleagues also know that. But is it enough to just look at them? Are we not here to pass legislation to help them? Are we here to give fish to the poor or are we not here to show the poor how to fish so they can manage on their own? Are we here to add to the legions of poor or to remedy the causes of poverty?

If we are here to remedy the causes of poverty, Mr. Chairman, there is no reason for this debate to go on in this House if we are sincere. Everybody should understand that this big thick bill is aimed at eliminating the causes of poverty. So let us increase the basic exemption for single persons.

One could say the same for married couples. What is \$5,000 for a married couple, Mr. Chairman? In fact, once food, clothing and rent are paid—which are the three costliest items—that married couple does not have enough money to raise a family. That is where they stand. That couple breaks up because of financial difficulties. That couple cannot achieve its aspirations and its legitimate desires. Why? Because of financial difficulties. That couple cannot progress as it would like to do. The same goes for single persons, Mr. Chairman. Some people come

[Mr. Fortin.]

up and tell us that Canada is a big country with large aspirations from coast to coast, that our country is very wealthy, that life is great under a liberal government in a "just society" with its "100,000 jobs".

Mr. Chairman, that can only last for a while. It is time for us to get serious in this Parliament, to roll up our sleeves and to stop our wishful thinking.

As for the just society, Mr. Chairman, it is not only through election promises which are never implemented that we want to see it, but we should be able to find it in books, in bills, in the government's political philosophies, which I find unacceptable.

That is why I speak, and I am not through yet on this subject, as well as my colleagues. That is why we are protesting. In our opinion, the poverty level is \$3,000, and I challenge any member to prove that he is able to make ends meet with \$1,500 or even \$3,000 a year.

Mr. Chairman, when you have two or eight children, what can you do with a yearly income of \$5,000? The statistics on poverty show that the poverty level is proportionate to the number of persons in a family, to its growth rate. This means that the larger the family, the more it is threatened by insecurity at the very time when the father finds himself jobless or when his income becomes inadequate.

Among the poor families, there are always large families. This does not mean they are unhappy, because they know what they have and appreciate it. What would a member say if he saw an individual going to the welfare office and wait "on all fours" in front of an official for an hour and a half to be told: We are sorry, but we cannot help you because your file has been mislaid; you are not eligible because you have \$300 in the bank.

Such a situation is absolutely shocking. Then, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) faced with a crisis such as that of October last, will come with tears in his eyes and make a pathetic appeal for peace and reason to the Canadians, saying: Be calm, stay home, everything is under control.

Of course everything is under control; people are crushed by big finance. It is very easy to understand. That is why we said, at the outset, that we do not believe in this reform, because it makes no sense.

We want a monetary reform in depth, that will recognize that all Canadians, regardless of their political affiliations, race or religion, have the economic right to a decent living, to a share of the national output, although they may have been replaced by machinery, may not be trained to work, may be too old or too young to work.

How many hardship cases could we not mention today? The economic system should ensure security and freedom, not a system that crushes individuals to its own advantage.

Was money created to be served or to serve us?

Does Parliament exist to serve itself or to serve the Canadian people?

Mr. Chairman, when a new department is created with much ballyhoo in order to tamper with the administration, what does the government say? It says that more administration is required to deal with the situation and that another department should be set up.