

The Address—Mr. J. F. Browne

While unemployment has proven to be a long lived and difficult problem, we should not lose sight of the fact that more Canadians are working than ever before, and that labour income in total has risen very substantially as have average weekly wages.

In 1956 the average Canadian workman earned \$69.44 per week, and in 1960, the last year for which complete figures are available, he earned \$75.83 per week or a gain of 17.1 per cent.

The cost of living during the same period rose by 8.3 per cent and, as I have previously pointed out, income tax rates have declined for the average Canadian, so that a substantial improvement in our standard of living has been achieved during this period of time.

In providing for the general welfare the government has also passed a number of measures to assist people in special circumstances. Since the present administration came into office we have seen hospital insurance brought into being on a national scale. Hospital construction grants have been increased and a fund set up to aid in research on children's diseases. Pensions for blind persons and for disabled persons have been increased. Old age assistance payments and unemployment assistance payments have been increased. And, once again, in the present throne speech, we have heard announced further increases proposed in these fields.

To encourage amateur athletics and to improve physical fitness an annual amount of \$5 million has also been made available.

Old age pensions were increased from \$46 to \$55 per month and again in the present speech from the throne we have further increases announced. Residence requirements were reduced from 20 years to 10 years and for the first time pensioners who meet the necessary residence requirements can travel to any part of the world for an unlimited length of time and still draw their pensions. Then too, the commission of inquiry was set up to make recommendations on how to implement a contributory system of social security over and above what we already have. This has led to the present announcement in the speech from the throne of the government's intention to seek those constitutional amendments which are necessary to bring such a scheme into being.

It is perhaps in the field of veterans affairs that the greatest improvements of all have been made. Veterans pensions and payments under the War Veterans Allowance Act were increased by substantial amounts in both 1957 and 1961. There have, of course, been many other improvements to these acts such as the easing of the eligibility requirements, the raising of total allowable income and others.

[Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

Unfortunately time does not permit me to deal with them in detail. However, I should like to give you just one or two examples of what this increase has meant to veterans. A married 100 per cent disability pensioner with two children now receives \$287 per month. The comparable rate in effect five years ago was \$144. When hon. members of this house stop to consider what this means to one of our veterans who served his country so faithfully, they will realize that he is now receiving in this instance double what he was receiving five years ago. I am sure that we sometimes do not stop to consider what vast improvements have been made in the last few years in this regard. In the case of a married veteran on war veterans allowance, the monthly payment prior to 1957 was \$108 per month. It has now risen to \$144 per month. The Veterans Land Act and many other pieces of veterans legislation have also been substantially improved. Then in the present speech from the throne we have placed before us further improvements in that regard. If any proof were needed of the sincere concern of this government for the welfare of the average person in this country, their actions in this field alone would provide it.

As I said at the outset of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, it is not possible during the course of one speech to deal with more than a small portion of the outstanding record of the government and its plans for the future. Before this debate is concluded, however, I am sure that my colleagues will have brought every aspect clearly before this house and the Canadian people.

In summing up, Mr. Speaker, may I say this. It is quite clear that there is no cause for pessimism in this country. Our world trade which is so important to us is at an all-time high, and by the very nature of the problems which it has overcome during the past four years the government has proved that it has the necessary energy and ability to overcome those which will face us in the future.

More Canadians are working and are earning more than at any other time in our history. While we are still faced with unemployment the improvements already made have been heartening and there is every prospect that, when the full benefit of the long term legislation already enacted by the government is felt, we shall be in a position to provide full employment for all our people. Our standard of living is at an all-time high. More has been accomplished in the field of social justice from the period of June, 1957, to the present time than at any previous time in our history.