

Social Policy

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Text]

METRIC CONVERSION

Question No. 1,397—**Mr. Schumacher:**

1. Does the government have available an economic impact analysis of the effect of conversion to the metric system and (a) if so (i) on what date was the analysis done and by whom (ii) from what areas was such data gathered (b) if not, for what reason?

2. What facts does the government have to ensure that metric conversion is in the best interest of the Canadian economy during the current recession in North America?

3. Will standardization benefit Canada in the long run?

4. What information is available, and what analysis has been done, regarding the implication of our trade position in the short term?

5. What steps has the government taken to provide (a) low cost loans (b) technical assistance (c) education for small businesses?

Return tabled.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

* * *

PETITIONS

REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCE OF NIP AND RRAP PROGRAMS

Mr. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): On motions, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present. May I do that now?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Crosbie: It is a petition from residents of the electoral district of St. John's West, the Mundy Pond area. The petition contains 136 signatures, and I think it is in the proper form. They are from an area where they have had a Neighbourhood Improvement Program and a Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program which have been of great benefit to them. They understand those programs are terminating on March 31 this year. They ask for them to be continued, that an appropriate measure be taken to continue them, because they have found them to be of great benefit. I should like to submit the petition, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[Translation]

MOTIONS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPERS

Mr. Yvon Pinard (Parliamentary Secretary to President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Shall the remaining notices of motions for production of documents be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—INEQUITIES IN SOCIAL POLICY

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the social policy of the government contains severe inequities for elderly Canadians, and in particular the House considers the practice of terminating the spouse's allowance after the death of the older marriage partner to be cruel and unjust.

She said: Mr. Speaker, once again the opposition is using one of its few allotted days to bring to the attention of the House a matter which seems to be of far too little concern to the government, that is, the increasing financial difficulties confronting elderly Canadians living on fixed and low incomes. Unfortunately, too many Canadians are unaware of the problems and inequities which exist for this particular age group, and many even think that such problems, if they ever did exist, have since been taken care of.

Everyone knows the old adage that if you repeat something often enough, people will begin to believe it. Once they take hold, certain ideas become so commonplace and so taken for granted that a bare bones exposure of the true facts can be downright startling. Current attitudes to social policy reflect this syndrome.

• (1512)

It is taken for granted that our standard of living has risen and that the number of Canadians living in poverty has declined. People equate the one with the other; but why? It is because they have heard for so long about the Prime Minister's just society and about the endless march of government welfare programs which purport to take care of the needs of all sectors of Canadian society.

Many people are inclined to believe they pay high taxes in order to help out those who are less fortunate than themselves. They believe it because the government has told them this is what is being done with their tax money, that it is being used for the benefit of other less fortunate people. As a recent report from the C. D. Howe Research Institute entitled "In Search of Robin Hood", issued in April of 1978, has pointed out:

Whether or not the outcome of government redistributive activity has been desirable, the belief that there has been a substantial increase in redistributive activity has gone unchallenged.

The report states:

It is almost an article of faith that income is being redistributed more and more in Canada.

The report then goes on to explode that article of faith. It shows that the federal government's budgetary policy has provided higher benefits for the higher income families than for the poor, and that the redistribution of income has changed little in the last 25 years. The report asks:

Has the federal government substantially improved the economic position of the poor relative to the highest income families in the 1970's?