Hon. Mr. Croll: We sent you short reports as to what we were doing on our trips. A great deal of this information we picked up as we went around the country and are now giving it to you in capsule form. I cannot say we were told this in Newfoundland and this in New Brunswick; this is part of the accumulated information.

There are 160,000 female heads of families with 350,000 children in school or under their control. The welfare recipients, ill people, old people, persons anyway who are no longer in the labour force, need income, services, opportunities and some incentives.

The life circumstances of these recipients did not change in terms of their continuing eligibility for financial aid. They should no longer be put off. Surely they should be looked after, for here at least is an opportunity for us to compensate the children of the poor for what we failed to do for their parents. I spoke of the guaranteed basic income, as endorsed by almost everyone who came before the committee. We have to give serious consideration to this.

Every time this is mentioned everyone asks how much it will cost. I do not know what it will cost until such time as we fix a poverty line or a standard of living. It is impossible to tell, but a great number of people without knowing what it will cost have already made up their minds that we cannot afford it. I think they should ask themselves, and I am prepared to ask them, can we afford not to do something?

As I see our mandate, it is to prepare a plan, a blueprint for a generation out of poverty. We are neither raiders nor guardians of the Treasury. It will have to look after itself and use its own best judgment. The Government will decide what we can afford and what we cannot afford. Ever since I came into politics I have heard the story that we cannot afford it. Yesterday a witness before the committee was told we cannot afford it, and he quickly replied that he had heard that with respect to every welfare measure that was ever proposed, beginning with the Old Age Pension Act in 1927.

I will also remind you that in 1966 we in the Senate brought in a recommendation for a guaranteed $75 for old age folks and a recommendation that the age be reduced. You will remember how we worried because it was going to cost $125 million to $150 million. We lost a lot of sleep about it and finally decided this is it. We were attacked for proposing to spend $125 million to $150 million—people in the Senate of all places recommending this. Then the Government added the supplements and spent $250,000 on it. The country was very happy and went along with it.

I remember another one back in the days of the Honourable Walter Harris, Minister of Finance in the St. Laurent Government. He said, "Six dollars is all this country can afford to give on a pension, and not a dime more. It will be doomsday before we give any more." A gentleman by the name of Diefenbaker said, "Pay no attention. We can give more." He was elected to office and raised the pension to $15.00. We survived in affluence.

We must give a great deal of thought to this, because we have to do something. If we cannot do any more than just make a start, so much today and so much later, it will be worth while. The days of quiet losers are over. There has been a concept ingrained in many of the poor that they were born to a small loaf. I do not think they believe that any more. Whether it was ever true or not I cannot say, but you would be surprised at the evidence we have on that.

I do not know what money we have to spend, but it occurs to me that if we are serious about doing something for the poverty stricken, our gross national product has increased year after year and brought us a certain amount of new taxes. Canadians do not have to give up part of what they have. All they have to do is make a commitment to share more equitably the increasing abundance the economy will provide. If it takes five or more years, we will have at least started. The history of social welfare in this country has always been the foot in the door.

I have taken too long, but I had to give you this information. My friend here, who is a senior and estimable member, has asked what the committee is doing. We are trying to fix a poverty level, that is, a standard of living. There have been studies by competent research personnel and organizations, and the committee has much useful information on that most vital aspect for study, assessment and report. This is what we have for consideration, and it is a vital part of our program.

First we have the Dominion Bureau of Statistics who made a study in 1969 for a family of one to five persons. We also have the Economic Council of Canada study of a family of one to five persons in 1968. Then there is the Ontario Department of Economics study for a family of one to five persons in 1969. Next there is the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion Gallup Poll for a family of four persons in 1969. The committee had a special study by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion—what we call the Gallup Poll—made on its behalf for a family of five persons, which was completed in June, 1970. These questions were asked:

(1) How many persons are in your household who live as part of your household?

(2) What was your family income last year before taxes?

(3) What is the smallest amount of money a family of your size needs each week in this part of the country to maintain the lowest living standards acceptable to you?

We have that study for consideration. In addition, the committee had presented to it budgetary estimates by the Department of Health and Welfare as well as by other competent organizations, individuals and those on welfare. On top of that we have our own life experience. We know what it costs to live, or have some ideas anyway.

All these studies need to be updated for two reasons. I indicated that some were made in 1967, some in 1968 and some in 1969. The latest one was our own in 1970. They need to be updated for two necessary elements—increased cost of living, inflation, and increased standards of living;