

prevents him from working to supplement the guaranteed minimum income. At the present time, the unemployed or the welfare recipient is under close watch and if he dares work, the benefits are cut off. Mr. Speaker, that is why there is such an unemployment insurance rush.

Such a system would encourage the instinctive ambition which is common to all men, that of having as much as the others, as well as a healthful rivalry. Who would not work, Mr. Speaker, even if only at \$30 or \$40 a week, in order to increase his minimum guaranteed income? Who would not do it?

We would no longer be faced with situations where we have to bring in West Indians to pick apples in Quebec, since inadequate programs established years ago have taught the people to stay unemployed. They are right to do so because the systems are false. We should therefore seriously consider establishing a minimum annual guaranteed income such as the one that we suggest.

[English]

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I think this is the first time that I, on behalf of my party, have had the opportunity to respond as first speaker to a motion proposed by the Social Credit Party. I should like to say to the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) that I find myself a little ill at ease when I hear him discussing monetary policy and, sometimes, general economic policy. However, I have noticed in my years here that his party from time to time has made vigorous and consistent advocacy on behalf of the people of Canada who most need assistance. They have been good spokesmen for the poor people of Canada. I commend them for that. May I say in a personal way that I wish to extend good wishes to the hon. member's leader, the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), who has struck me as one of the most interesting, effective and entertaining parliamentarians in this House. I extend to him my good wishes for his health and recovery.

The mover of the motion was profoundly right in pointing out that although we are a rich country, although Canada is always in the top bracket of the "have" countries—in any great gathering of developed countries Canada is always included—although we are rich, with great resources and a productive people, one Canadian citizen in four or five lives at or below the poverty line. God knows, those at the poverty line do not enjoy gracious living by any means. It is certainly not gracious living at a time of rampant and uncontrolled inflation. I understand that while one in five, or perhaps it is now one in four, of our citizens as a whole are living at or below the poverty line, half our people 65 and over are at that terrible level.

● (1540)

There must be something wrong with a system which year after year can tolerate so much poverty in a rich country. I often think of the colossal gall of the political party that can bring that about year after year, and yet somehow insist to the people of Canada that they and they alone should be given the power to govern this country. Is there no better time for the party presently holding office to have the humility to ask if it is, in fact, doing well enough for the people of Canada.

Guaranteed Income

We have to find some way to improve the situation for more of our Canadian citizens. We all know there are many, many programs. There is a proliferation of programs, municipal, provincial and national, whereby the state in one of its emanations tries to assist the people who need assistance. We have our select groups. We give so much to the old people. They are not getting enough. We give the disabled so much under the aegis of the provincial government. The stories we hear from some of these people are very, very shameful. Someone once said you almost have to be dead and be able to prove it before you are regarded as wholly disabled by some authorities. We have our family allowances which give a measure of assistance to those in that group. We have much further to go.

We should look carefully at the suggestion which the hon. member has put forward. He pointed out that his party first advocated it. There are other groups who have suggested a guaranteed annual income. One must be very careful what one says about the gentlemen in the other place, but they are rarely described as starry eyed radicals. However, the Senate committee on poverty produced a very interesting document. I believed they worked sincerely when looking at the problem. They advocated the establishment of a guaranteed annual income program. I do not know how seriously their suggestion was taken by the present government, but surely such a group of competent and senior legislators lending their support to a proposal should mean something. When I first heard the expression "guaranteed annual income" used, there was a great shying away from it. People were suggesting this was some device for legislating, legitimizing and eternalizing laziness, bumming, welfare and so on.

We have to look carefully as to whether we might be at a stage where we should consider replacing a whole congeries of programs by something which is more efficiently organized and more universal in its application. The sympathetic feelings I have toward the guaranteed annual income are along the lines of its possible greater efficiency. We know that in society there are people who must be given security. We must do more for our aged people. We must do more for those between 60 and 65. Last session I referred to the amusing, if it were not so tragic, situation whereby if you are 90 years you can work all you like and get your full Canada Pension Plan, but in a more productive period, if you work you have your pension deducted.

All across the land today we are faced with people who are opting out of the work force and getting more fully involved in programs of assistance from the state. That is disturbing. I do not think we should ever have a situation in which if someone is employable, it is more to his benefit to receive state aid than to work. However, I receive hundreds of letters from people who are receiving a small pension. If they go out and find a small job, every single dollar is knocked off their pension even though quite often the two together are not sufficient to keep the man or his family going.

We have to get back that incentive. We have to stop what is far too common, the bureaucratic impinging on citizens who desire to work. I know that in every society down through the ages there are some people who are going to swing the lead, to beat the rap, but I cannot