

*The Address—Mr. Lalonde*

benefited from their suggestions, I will be able to introduce the new legislation concerning the guaranteed family income plan.

The government has also undertaken to improve the economic situation of the aged. The first leading principle of the social security system of the future, we stated, is that aged people who can no longer work must be provided with a guaranteed minimum annual income. A number of amendments have been made over the past years to improve the lot of pensioners and aged people in Canada.

Canada already has a guaranteed income plan for the aged. We must still find out to what extent pensions paid constitute a fair income.

I wish to ensure the House that I have considered all suggestions submitted for the improvement of old age security pensions, and that I have already discussed this matter with several of my provincial counterparts. I am confident that I shall complete this consultation with the provincial ministers well before the official formulation of a proposal to the House. However I can assure hon. members that a substantial old age pension increase will be announced soon, and I hasten to add that it will not be a mere token increase. We will bring forward other measures in order to improve the financial position of more elderly people, measures we must first discuss with the provinces in the light of the principles stated in the Speech from the Throne as to a complete review of the social security system. While making our decision, we must always bear in mind the opinion so often expressed by my provincial colleagues that increasing the gap between the pensions available to people over 65 leads to greater difficulties as regards people under 65. That is a question to which we should give great attention in our upcoming federal-provincial review of the overall income system.

Mr. Speaker, I also should like to point out to the House that officials met recently in order to improve the benefits provided under the Canada Pension Plan.

The 1970 white paper on income security recommended substantial increases in pensions for widows and disabled people.

Discussions took place this week and they will continue in March, then we will have the opportunity of discussing them with the ministers during the April meeting.

I should like also to inform the House of the very important meeting on health matters that will take place next Friday with the ministers of health in order to consider that question and, if possible, agree on a new and complete health care financing system in Canada. Under that proposal, new financial arrangements would be introduced to give greater scope to the provinces when they set their priorities within the national overall standards and follow the policy they deem the most efficient, considering such priorities.

Since I became interested in the affairs of the state, Mr. Speaker, I have been warned on occasion that a government should never venture on a road whose destination is more or less uncertain. For two reasons, I cannot accept such advice from timorous and conservative souls. First, if we perceive with enough vision the guidelines and if we have devoted sufficient time to the consideration of a

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problem—as we have certainly done within the government of Canada—we do have then a sufficiently clear notion of the road to take it with some confidence.

Still more important however, if we do not have the courage to revise the programs thoroughly we are unfaithfully imposing on the taxpayer, even without knowing it, the high cost of temporary and incoherent solutions. If I understand the Canadian people well, the governments should put an end to the dispersion of efforts and participate instead in the entire revision of the system just as the government of Canada is suggesting today.

[English]

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, I begin with my sincere congratulations to you and to all our presiding officers, but particularly to the Speaker of the House, who has again been acclaimed as the chief commoner among us. I am not one of these who believe in developing sophisticated techniques for securing for all time the position of permanent Speaker. I always believe that when the time comes Members of Parliament will choose from among themselves a Speaker whom they will want to have in office as long as he will stay, and this is what we have been able to do. We have chosen one of us. He is chief among us, *primus inter pares*. We honour his selection, and that is a fair way to have the whole matter dealt with. I congratulate our Speaker and I congratulate our corporate wisdom in time after time giving him the burdens of the high office, the functions of which he discharges with ease, grace and great impartiality.

• (1630)

I have as well to congratulate the hon. members who moved and seconded the address. I think they acquitted themselves very well.

This is a most interesting time to be in parliament, Mr. Speaker. It is my seventh parliament. I come from the cradle of confederation, the city of Charlottetown—sometimes I have to assure people that in spite of my appearance I am not a father of confederation! It is indeed a most interesting time. I look across at the truncated, traumatized and slightly tenderized government led by a swinger who has become a clinger. I look down to my left at those who were the mighty terrors in this House—my, how terrible they could be. They are now the handmaidens of the iniquitous of yesterday. The people across the way wear the cap of penitence and the cloak of humility. How different things are from four years ago when I took part in the Speech from the Throne. The whole place was supposed to tremble at the merest shrug then.

It is not of course for me to tell my erstwhile neighbours to the left, geographically that is, what they should do and how they should preserve themselves in the public life of Canada. I believe they have a role to play but because I used to sit near them, and I like a good many of them, I should just like to say that as they accept the embrace of the fervent and fevered party across the way they should just pay a little attention to history. When Ulysses saw the cave of the Cyclops he almost went in, but he noticed that all the tracks went in and none came out.

I am surprised that the hon. member, the scrapper from Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas), with his