

*Income Tax Act*

● (1730)

I call upon the Government to take significant action in the area of policy which affects poverty in the country. The Government should consider the notion of a guaranteed annual income. A guaranteed annual income assures people that they will have the income to meet their basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter. It also encourages people to work. A guaranteed annual income is structured in such a way that if you had a job and made some money you would not lose that income by having it deducted from your income support. You would be able to keep a significant portion of it. This gives people an incentive to work because the money they earn will not be deducted from their social support.

It is time that Canadian governments took a serious look at a guaranteed annual income. Perhaps as part of that re-examination we could find a new name for the policy. Guaranteed annual income has a ring that leaves some people with the impression that it just encourages people to be lazy, or that people do not have to contribute to society. Perhaps we need a new label for this policy.

Rather than bringing in piecemeal, band-aid measures, why does the Government not bring in a significant measure that would have a real impact on poverty? The other way in which the Government could have such an impact is through the pursuit of a full employment policy. One of the reasons we have increasing levels of poverty in the country is that there are more and more people unemployed. According to official statistics, over one million people in the country are unemployed. Such a high level of unemployment naturally leads to an increase in poverty and suffering.

We need a serious commitment by the Government to put in place a network of policies with employment its highest priority. All citizens should have the right and opportunity to work. All citizens need the opportunity to contribute to society and to have a reasonable income to meet their needs in order to enjoy life and be a part of our community. While I applaud the Government for having taken a worthwhile step today, I think the step should be seen in the larger context of the level of poverty in the country and the alternative measures which the Government could be undertaking in order to demonstrate to Canadians its compassion and concern about the disadvantaged and poor people.

Tax discounting raises an issue regarding the way in which our tax system is administered. We have created the child tax credit, a system of taxation which benefits poor people more than those who are affluent, which is a good social policy. Then along come some wolves who seek to take advantage of the social policies. While the child tax credit does benefit the poor and adds to the progressiveness of the income tax system, if you stand back and get a wider view of the situation the inequities stand out. Today we are trying to enforce some of the equitable aspects of our tax system. We are trying to salvage a good tax policy.

While the Government deserves some credit for taking a worthwhile step, we must ask why it did not go further.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the Government has done something good today. But if it really cares about poor people, I suggest it could do more. Other things must be done, and the measure we are dealing with today is good, but the government must do more.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ravis:** Mr. Speaker, I must first applaud the Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) for complimenting the Government on its move in Bill C-11. I join with him in that. I think it is a great piece of legislation. In particular, it demonstrates that the Government is not only fiscally responsible but also very compassionate. I say that because the NDP tends to think it has the exclusive right to compassion in the country. The Government, through this and many other pieces of legislation, is showing that it too cares about the people who are having a difficult time, whether they be single women or families with young children who, not necessarily through their own fault, need a helping hand. I recognize this need in my constituency of Saskatoon East; all of my Conservative colleagues recognize that need throughout the country. I think this is a good piece of legislation and the Member for Winnipeg North Centre certainly agrees with it.

The NDP is trying to grab a piece of the action on tax reform. The message to come down from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) very soon will demonstrate to that Party that this is a priority with the Conservative Government and that it will be taking the lead on that issue. These are things which the Liberals did not attempt in the last 20 years. There are new initiatives which can be taken in order to broaden the tax base and reach the people who are having difficulty in the country today.

**Mr. Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I have never claimed that New Democrats have a patent on compassion. However, I believe that this Party seeks to speak out for fairness in Canadian society. I would claim as well that we have a history of speaking out in the interests of ordinary people. The Hon. Member indicates that his party is a compassionate party. I ask him why his compassionate party, in the last two Budgets, increased taxes for ordinary Canadian families by approximately \$1,000? He talks about tax reform. We have been pushing for tax reform.

● (1740)

The Government mentioned in the Throne Speech that it would lower the rate of income tax. I would caution him that if on the one hand the Government moves to lower the rate of income tax, while on the other hand increases taxes by way of a hidden taxes, I will want to look at the bottom line to see whether taxes have gone down or have increased. I would hope that a compassionate party and a compassionate Government