

*Canada Assistance Plan*

**Mr. Benson:** By leave, now.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** By leave, now?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Benson** moved the third reading of the bill.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

**CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN****ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM TO ASSIST PERSONS IN NEED**

The house resumed from Monday, June 27, consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen for the second reading of Bill No. C-207, to authorize the making of contributions by Canada toward the cost of programs for the provision of assistance and welfare services to and in respect of persons in need.

**Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe East):** Mr. Speaker, we listened with interest last evening when the minister spoke on Bill C-207, enlarged on it and made some explanations in regard to it. This bill will to a large extent bring together a lot of loose ends in this department. Pretty well everything that is in the act was previously covered and the bill will now bring everything together under one head.

The bill is concerned with the war on poverty that was started by Mr. Kent; it was his brainchild. It is now carried on by Mr. Phillips with six or seven assistants. It is the same, largely, as the war on poverty in the United States. It has not reached the grand plan for the great society yet, but maybe it will someday. About a million people are now receiving assistance in Canada. The minister proposes to pump an extra \$85 million into this program in the current year. Public service and welfare expenditures at all levels across Canada have now reached \$500 million. This amount does not seem to be disproportionate. As a matter of fact, if we are getting value for the dollar I would question, when we have a gross national product of approximately \$52 billion, whether it is enough to accomplish what we are setting out to do—if we really are setting out to do it, and I hope we are.

Fundamentally this program will cover food, shelter, clothing, fuel, utilities, household supplies, etc. The great majority of this amount, in fact 95 to 100 per cent, will be put right back into circulation. Therefore this money is in no way being put aside; it is

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

put right back in circulation; it is in the life stream of currency and there is no loss in this respect.

The minister noted that the plan would make funds available to improve the staffs in municipal as well as provincial welfare departments and mentioned that in the province of Ontario they are now establishing regional offices. I think this is all to the good, but I am wondering whether this grand plan may be to build elaborate offices and staff them with people, well trained people perhaps, and spend a great many dollars in this connection which should be spent at the grass roots and on the people we propose to help. I think this aspect of the matter is worth watching, and I am well aware of the fact that we are very short of social workers now.

The minister stated that about one million people are on assistance now. This is a striking fact in comparison when you consider the brief submitted by the Ontario Federation of Labour. If this brief is correct, and I have reason to believe it is fairly accurate, if this is so, and we have only one million people on assistance, then surely there must be many people not receiving assistance in this country that need it.

• (9:00 p.m.)

The Ontario Federation of Labour stated in their brief that a million and a half people are living in destitution, and two million and a half lack the necessities and comforts of life. I am sure the minister is as well acquainted with this brief as I am. The yardstick that was used was a family of four living on an income of \$2,000 or less, and individuals living on \$1,000 or less. These people were considered destitute. Then there were families of four living on \$3,000 and individuals living on \$1,500, all of whom were deprived of many ordinary necessities. Of course the individuals living on \$1,500 are poverty stricken, as are the families of four living on \$3,000. There are those who will say that many live on less, but there is a vast difference between the million that are on assistance and those who need help, and points up many problems.

I suggest to the minister that the amounts that he has set out may not be sufficient. Let us consider who are the people included in the categories I have mentioned. They are the older workers, the pensioners, the unemployed and the underemployed. They are the school dropouts, the undereducated, the widows and the fatherless children. It is to be noted that about 5 per cent of the children