

That will amount to a total loss of approximately \$171.8 million to that region of Canada. That is bad enough, but when it is added to the other steps the government is in the process of taking, the viciousness and vindictiveness of the situation become even more apparent. At the same time as this measure is going through, there are cutbacks in the equalization program, the very linchpin of confederation.

**Mr. Breau:** Another untruth.

**Miss MacDonald:** The Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) will not say how much those cutbacks will be. He indicated that there will be cutbacks. He did not deny that in the House. The hon. member for Gloucester can look at the record. How much will the cutbacks amount to? Will they amount to \$100 million or \$150 million? Perhaps the hon. member for Gloucester can tell us. He knows they will come about. On top of that, there were cutbacks in the social services program. If the program had been carried out and put onto effect, the impact would have been most beneficial to Atlantic Canada. But it was abolished, it was cancelled unilaterally by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin). As well, the minister cancelled the health resources fund where the Atlantic region had more difficulty than the prosperous regions in gearing up the machinery to bring to fruition certain programs on a 50-50 cost-sharing basis. Just as those programs were about to come into effect, the Minister of National Health and Welfare unilaterally cut them.

These four programs represent a cutback to Atlantic Canada of \$500 million which provincial governments had been led to believe would be forthcoming. One can say, "What about the other parts of the country? Why are they not facing the same problem?" The reality of the situation is that the other parts of the country can absorb such a body blow more readily. When Atlantic Canada is hit with a body blow of this nature, it can become a death blow. That is what hon. members from Atlantic Canada should be aware of when they support a bill of this nature.

What the government seems to be saying in a callous, cruel, and calculated manner, is that one can take the most vulnerable part of the country and kick it while it is down. But in doing so, one makes it more difficult for that part of the country to bounce back. That is why the long-term effect will have an adverse impact on Canada as a whole. Holding the country together is no easy task; no one ever professed it would be. Certainly Joe Howe 110 years ago did not think it would be. But not even he, in his angriest denunciations of what Ottawa might do to Atlantic Canada, would have forecast a deliberate move by a federal government to undermine the economy of that region, to cripple it, to make it more dependent, to increase its dependency rather than its self-sufficiency, and to make it a continuing cause for concern to all of the other parts of the country.

● (1512)

Ontario, not the federal government, expressed that concern very well when it spoke on behalf of all the provinces against

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the measures in this bill, because its ministers could see what it would do to the country. Only Ottawa seems blind to the fact that its moves are undermining the very unique union in which we live.

I would say to you, sir, that the unity of this country has many dimensions. The government is attacking one of them in this bill, and that is one of the very weaknesses of the bill. The other, sir, is that the legislation we are addressing today will have its heaviest brunt against working women, women in the labour force.

I am delighted to welcome the new recruits in this House in the last couple of days to the cause of women's rights, including the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) and the hon. member for Gloucester. I welcome their belated concern for the rights of women. I would say to them their expressions of concern on behalf of women in this House, while belated, are nevertheless welcome, and I trust we will hear from them on this subject on many occasions. I hope their conversion to this cause will continue. The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville, to my left, has undergone a conversion, but I must say, sir, that in sticking with the provisions of this bill the government has undergone no similar conversion with regard to women's rights in this country and no similar conversion with regard to the lot of working women.

In fact, sir, the government has a long history of policy and attitudes which discriminate against women, and this bill is one more of them, and the minister cannot dump his responsibilities. He ignored completely the representations made to him by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and by the National Action Committee. What we hear instead is a continuing group of ministers going about this country blaming high unemployment on the entrance of women into the work force.

Who was the latest to do that? It was none other than the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), speaking the other night in Toronto to a Liberal fund-raising dinner. Mind you, he was speaking to a Liberal fund-raising dinner, and when he put this proposition forward he knew only Liberals would accept it. That is why he gave this kind of message to the Liberal fund raising dinner, under the heading of unemployment.

Who was to blame for unemployment? The Prime Minister said "there has been a social revolution" in this country. "Women and young people are entering the labour force at a rate at which they've never entered it before." Why did he single out women and young people? Why does he have to be focusing continually upon women? Then he went on to say in a wonderfully patronizing manner, "I'm not knocking it, particularly the women." How long do women have to take that kind of patronizing comment from the Prime Minister of this country? How long does he intend to go on making such comments that it is women entering the labour force who are causing unemployment in this country? That is the kind of thing we hear, and that is the kind of intent that is embodied in this bill.

The fact that the government makes this kind of comment, and that the Prime Minister goes out and makes this kind of