

*Government Orders*

during the last six weeks. I know most members on this side of the House must concur with the feeling that most Canadians have. Time and time again we put ideas forward from this side of the House and they seem to fall on deaf ears. The government says that it listens. I challenge the government to initiate an emergency debate on the number one issue in this country: the issue of full employment.

I can only ask the government, and I repeat myself, to please listen to Canadians. Let us make this House respectable once again and get a program for full employment on the floor of this House before the end of the week.

**Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Mr. Speaker, it is not a pleasure to get up and speak on this bill today. I have spoken on it at two other stages of its passage through this House. I would have thought after being home for six weeks to witness firsthand the carnage the recession has left in every single constituency in this country that the government would have come back perhaps a little kinder, gentler and wiser. It must understand this is exactly the type of legislation which will not just drive Canadians further over the abyss, but will create untold millions of throw-away people—our children—in the future.

I want to speak specifically. I have very limited time before we go into Question Period. There is something very disturbing about what is going on in this country.

Bill C-32 puts a cap on CAP. I heard the minister say this morning that this bill and this government have made sure that those who need the help the most are not affected. I hate to tell the government and the minister this, but poverty does not know geographical barriers.

I am sure the poor in metro Toronto do not think they are any better off because they live in Toronto or Ontario than the poor in Manitoba or Nova Scotia. If you are poor, you are poor and that is it. The government has come in with this amount of flimflam and said that all it is doing is capping the growth of its contribution to the Canada Assistance Program in the wealthiest provinces.

It should check its head offices and have a look at what it has done in the Ontario economy. It has driven the Ontario economy from being one it considered overheated two years ago—it attempted to anaesthetise it by putting interest rates up outrageously—into recession. It drove hundreds of thousands of children across this country into poverty.

One of the members earlier was talking about children and poverty. I looked over to the minister and his buddies and they were having a good guffaw. I do not know what the heck they were talking about, but I will tell you if anybody here ever doubts whether or not we are doing our job, talk to a mother or a father who cannot feed their kids nutritious food.

Talk to parents who believe they are not the best thing in the world for their kid because they have to live in substandard housing. They are living in places with rats and termites and their kids go to school in worn out clothing, with no food in their bellies. It is not just happening in the slums, it is happening right across this country.

This government has some nerve to come in here today, as my hon. colleague from Broadview—Greenwood said, after witnessing firsthand the carnage that is out there, and proceed with this regressive bill. There are some pretty disturbing statistics out there. If we could strip our partisanship down just for a few seconds, we might figure out that as human beings we have a responsibility to do something here.

This is not Bangladesh, it is Canada. Yet in Canada we have over 1 million children living in poverty. Those kids do not vote. They did not vote for this government or the opposition. Damn it, they are children who did not choose to be born into poverty. They were born of parents who live in a country where you should expect better treatment. It is a country that is wealthy enough that no one who has the skills, ability and desire should have to see their dreams collapse or their pride or integrity go down the drain because they are living on \$650 or \$700 a month on municipal welfare. What a great life.

There were some statistics quoted this morning. They are one of the reasons I wanted to get into the debate before two o'clock. This is not just one of those bills to fix, extend, broaden, or plug some tax loophole or some nicety of fiscal manoeuvring between one government and the next.

I am going to quote my hon. colleague from Winnipeg who has led for us in debate and has done an incredible job. He quoted from a *Globe and Mail* story dated Saturday, December 28. You can read this and weep. It says that between 1989 and 1990 the fate of Canada's poor children got worse. Their numbers rose by 15 per