

*Government Orders*

Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child says that Canada, among other nations: "must recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development".

Quite clearly, with social assistance rates at around 50 per cent of the poverty line, this commitment on the part of Canada is far from being met, and Bill C-32 will make it even more difficult to meet. Rather than heading toward responding responsibly to our commitments to the international community and to Canada's children, we are making matters worse for them. Surely this is the rankest of hypocrisy.

The ratification of the convention is not a public relations exercise, it is a commitment that Canada made to putting its children first. I hope the government will finally see the light and agree that following the regressive policies being pursued is making children worse and making Canada's commitment hollow.

The recent changes in federal social and tax policies have not helped Canada's poor, they have made matters worse. There is a litany of government initiatives which have attacked Canada's poorest, making Canada's poor pay for the deficit, pay for the extravagances of former federal governments and this federal government. It was not the poor who generated this deficit; they are the least able to respond to it and yet they are being asked to pay to get this government out of its fiscal difficulties.

It is not just Bill C-32. Bill C-21 makes unemployment insurance harder to get and it makes it run out more quickly. We have seen hundreds of thousands of new unemployed workers across this country as a result of this government's economic policies, as a result of free trade and as a result of the global competitiveness that Canada is finding it so difficult to respond to. We have more unemployed workers who are moving into social assistance more quickly because of the adverse changes made to the unemployment insurance program.

The partial deindexation of family benefits means that families who need money get less each year. The clawback on family allowance and pensions, also not fully indexed, means that the threshold for the cutoff of benefits gets lower each year. Further cuts to social

assistance and health and post-secondary education are threatening the future of medicare and accessible post-secondary education.

There is still no child care strategy, which is so necessary to ensure that many Canadian care givers can also take part in the workforce. We saw the GST and the tax credit, again not indexed, so more and more of Canada's poorest will be denied their GST tax credit as time goes on. In my province we have now seen the GST attached to water, a basic necessity, something this government said would not take place. The government committed itself to not taxing necessities when the bill was introduced, but we see it nonetheless expanding.

It is clear that this is more than just financial; this is about politics, it is about a philosophy, it is about a way of responding favourably to the government's friends and attacking those who live a life of poverty and hunger.

The minister talked about how necessary the Canada Assistance Plan was and how necessary it was to make these cuts; presumably, therefore, how necessary it is to worsen the situation of the poorest of Canadians. He pointed out what the Canada Assistance Plan does—it helps the poor. Why would this government want to cut a program that helps the poor? He talked about how the Canada Assistance Plan is useful because it provides an opportunity for people who are in need of assistance to receive that assistance, and then go on hopefully to form a part of the work force later.

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By cutting the resources available to the Canada Assistance Plan, this government makes it more difficult to reform the system, makes it more difficult to assist Canadians to re-enter the job market. That is what the government says it wants to do.

There is no real commitment to employment by this government. Unemployment is getting worse. No government since the war has committed itself to a policy of full employment. That is the core of this issue and that is where I would like to end up.

It is critical if we are ever going to address the problems of the poor, which are placing demands on government resources which the government responds to by cutting the resources available to those poor, that