

Many people, indeed many Canadians, may think or espouse something to the contrary. Some have been known to think that they would live contentedly at a young age—I am talking about pre-retirement years—if only they had enough money to get by. I do not believe that is true. I do not believe that men and women at the productive stage in their lives in any society—and I am talking about ours in particular—can be happy human beings without some sense of earning their own way in society, without some sense that they are working, as I have said, not only to make a contribution to maintain their own existence, but to contribute also to society.

What should be concerning us now in that light more than anything else is that our government has embarked on a budget policy that has built right into it from the outset an increase in unemployment levels. There was a commitment to the people of Canada not to change their economic circumstances so that more men and women could work; it was a policy that said to the people of Canada that in 1982, 1983 and 1984 unemployment would get worse. At this point in our history as a society I regard that as a complete abdication of moral and political responsibility to the people of our country.

Like members of the Conservative Party, my colleagues on the special task force and I spent a good part of the Christmas period listening to the people of Canada. I will not list all the instances I could, but I want to mention to the House, and I hope this might get through to the government side, some of the instances that came directly to my attention. They will stand out in my memory as long as I live.

The first is a young logger in Vancouver. I would guess he is in his early thirties. He told me that he had been working since he left high school and for the first time he had been laid off. He was confronted simultaneously with almost a doubling of his mortgage payments. This was December. He told me that when this increased payment came into effect in January he was going to lose his home. It was as clear as that because he could not maintain the mortgage payment on unemployment insurance. He would not likely have been able to maintain the mortgage payment even if he had remained on the job.

My second example is a 53-year-old man in Thunder Bay, who also told me that at 53 he had been unemployed only once in his life but now was being laid off, in this case by the Canada Steamship Lines Ltd. because of a complete shutdown of operations. What was tragic about this man was, first, he had no pension and, second, he was 53 years of age. Of all those affected by the lay-offs there were only five or six in that particular enterprise who would be getting a pension. Here is a 53-year-old man in Canada in the middle of winter being laid off with no pension. His is a permanent lay-off and he has no other job to go to in the Thunder Bay region, that is for certain.

My third example is a mother on welfare with two children in Brantford, Ontario. This is part of the country that is so devastatingly affected right now by lay-offs in the industrial sector. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) cited the figures that many of us have used recently, some

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235,000 lay-offs in the manufacturing sector since August, just four months ago.

Last month in Ontario alone lay-offs have been occurring at the rate of 3,000 per working day. At a meeting in this community, so typical of what is happening in the industrial sector where we found this young mother with two children living on welfare, someone spoke and attacked people like her implicitly—and we have heard this line before—by saying that there is a job out there for anyone who really wants it. All you have to do is make the effort. I am pleased to say as a Canadian that we do not hear that nearly so often as we used to. But that mother's reaction to that statement was very profound. She was in the audience. She was not scheduled to speak at all, but she got up and said: "I am a young mother with two children. I am living on welfare and I work two hours a day". I think she said a day, it might have been two hours a week, but the two-hour figure stands out in my mind. But what really stands out is that she said she wanted work and she wanted a 40-hour-a-week job, just like everyone else, because that would give her some dignity.

Fourth, there was someone in my own constituency of Oshawa: in this case I am speaking about a 41-year-old mother. I learned about her after I left the meeting in Oshawa. She spoke with a reporter. She did not say anything of the unemployed at the meeting. But what she said was reported on the front page of *The Oshawa Times*. This 41-year-old woman actually attempted suicide by jumping into the Oshawa harbour. She said this: "There was just no work, not even cleaning." Clearly, this woman was desperate. She happened to have been saved by a friend who was on the scene.

The final instance is a case from Cape Breton. Cape Breton, as we all know, has persistently suffered high levels of unemployment. I say persistently because this government, which we have had for years, has lacked the political willpower and the long-range economic sense to take that community with its iron resources, with its harbour and with its steelworkers, and create a first-class steel industry. I will not elaborate on this. In reading about the lay-offs all over Canada this man said to me that if the rest of Canada had unemployment levels the way we have experienced them in the past decade, there would be a revolution in this country. I think he is certainly very close to being right, if not totally right. If we all experienced real levels of unemployment of 20 per cent to 25 per cent for the past decade, then even the Liberal government would have been forced to respond or there would have been something approaching a revolution.

● (1540)

I said, Mr. Speaker, that was the last instance I would cite, but there is one other which came from one of the meetings and was simply that men and women ought to have the right to work. That says it all, Mr. Speaker, and whatever the Government of Canada feels or believes in terms of economic policy—and I am going to come to that in a minute—we in the New Democratic Party believe that every Canadian, man or