

Supply

opportunities that we want to see come about through things like employment equity.

Quite honestly, this is an area where we have a good record at the federal government level, in so far as women are concerned. We have in fact seen a 50 per cent increase in the promotion of women in management over the past few years in those areas. I can see some really good progress taking place there.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate on the budget and the implications of it on the women of Canada.

Unfortunately this budget continues in the same direction as previous budgets brought forward by this government. It puts the burden of deficit reduction on the shoulders of those who are least responsible for that deficit, and least able to pay for it. Unfortunately it is a continuing trend.

The budget is harmful to women, and particularly to poor women with children. It ends universal family allowance and replaces it with a two-tiered system based on income. Instead of giving the most money to the poor, the government in many respects is going back to the future with this outdated and Victorian notion of separating people and children into the deserving poor and the undeserving poor.

It is an insult to separate children into the two camps of those whose parents do have jobs, and those whose parents do not have jobs. It is an insult to reward the children whose parents have jobs with this small supplement of \$500. It is an insult to call this bizarre gesture an incentive to work.

Why does this government not understand that hunger and deprivation are in themselves incentives to work? Through its own mismanagement, this government has caused and exacerbated a recession which has put 1.5 million Canadians out of work in this country.

The government has again in this budget cut training programs for people on welfare. The government has turned its back on the one million children in this country who are in need of child care.

Without child care, poor parents cannot enter the job market. They cannot keep a job. The poor people whom I know and have met want jobs, training, education and adequate care for their children. Instead they are being pushed into a spiral of desperation. Sixty per cent of these poor are women.

• (1120)

When the government says poor parents do not work because they are lazy or unmotivated, it is really saying that women with children are lazy. It has no idea how much hard work is involved in taking care of children and raising them.

I was a young mother who struggled with a chronically ill two-year old child and newborn twins at the same time. I know how difficult it is to be at home with limited resources and try to provide for your children the best way you can. This government has made it much more difficult for those women who are in the home trying to cope with raising children by cutting back on the resources available to those women.

How dare this government infer that kind of a daily struggle is laziness? Unfortunately, a lot of members of this House of Commons have no understanding of the reality of women's lives. They have no understanding of the reality of some women who line up at food banks with children crying and hanging on to their jackets. That in itself is an incentive to work, as is watching your children grow up without the ordinary things that other children have, and become statistics as high school drop-outs.

The minister, in her remarks, talked about how much better some women are doing in our educational institutions. It is true. More women are entering post-secondary institutions now, but all of us in this House must remember that 30 per cent of the children who enter school in Canada do not finish school. Thirty per cent of our young people do not graduate from high school, and that is an incentive to work. Feeling like the world is going to cave in on you unless you can change things for yourself and your family is an incentive to work.

Just for once I would like to be able to take away money, education, training, and connections from the ministers on the other side of the House. I would like to see them live on the level of income of many people and many single women with children in our country, and see if they would then come up with these kinds of policies. I think then they would have a lesson in reality and would perhaps be more sensitive to the needs of women, children and the poor in our society.

The minister also talked about the new child benefit. Well it denies benefits to the poorest of the poor. Only people earning \$10,000 to \$20,000 will get the extra \$500. Those whose incomes are in the range of \$3,750 will not see a single extra cent. How can anyone be expected to