

Government Orders

voice the anger and frustration they feel, but their voices must be heard. It is the working poor who will lose most by this legislation. They will see their benefits cut by \$1,500, money needed to feed their children, to keep them from the welfare rolls, to keep what remains of their dignity.

This government knows only too well the effects of poverty. It knows that undernourished children learn at a slower rate than those who are well fed. It knows that the poverty trap exists, that parents cannot find affordable day care so as to take on full time work. It knows that one in four Canadians are functionally illiterate. Most of them are poor. It knows that the two-income family is a necessity just to stay above the poverty line. It knows that 60 per cent of those who will see their benefits reduced by Bill C-21 earn less than \$15,000 a year.

The government knows it is punishing the poor in this country. The government is well informed about its ill-intentioned bill. It is the poor of this country who are not being heard by this government. But we know who is being heard. It is the business council.

I would like to conclude my remarks by again pleading with the government. I know at this point that the plea is going to fall on deaf ears. I plead with this government to not pass Bill C-21, to look at bringing in an unemployment insurance amendment that will enhance the situation for workers in this country, not punish the workers.

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member for Mission—Coquitlam on Bill C-21. I would like to give her an example of a situation that we had in B.C. in my riding and ask for a comment from her. It had to do with a recent announcement by the provincial government, that crazy and confused government in Victoria, that some time ago said it was going to require people who were on social assistance to be sure to find a job otherwise they would be cut off from their benefits.

I had the opportunity the day after to visit the CEIC office in Vanderhoof. It is just an hour's drive west of Prince George. I asked the local manager, "What about this announcement yesterday? Has that had any impact on you?" The manager smiled and said it had because already that morning people had come in to his office

asking that he or members of his staff sign a form to say that that they had come in to ask for work.

Of course, this local manager made it clear it was not working for the federal government with any of the jobs that were listed there. He said that he was not aware if any co-ordination had taken place between the B.C. government and the federal government on that announcement. The impact was that the human resources department in the province of B.C. would have one criterion for being employable and then CEIC would have yet another. His comment was, "Fair enough, they are going to have to come in and they may or may not fit our criteria".

I would be interested in the member's comments on that kind of federal-provincial co-operation, if there is any, and how these kinds of problems exist and how they can be resolved.

Ms. Langan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising the question. We have two territories and 10 provinces in this country. As the news will portray, seldom do we agree on much.

I think the key point of this is that there are 10 provinces and two territories with 12 sets of rules, plus the federal criteria. I am quite alarmed at what this is going to mean to British Columbians, for example. I had a constituent who was unemployed, who did not have a telephone and who came to my office during the summer and used the telephone. This person wrote endless letters of application in longhand and went to endless interviews. This person happened to be a very articulate and skilled person who documented every move she had made. When she went to the social assistance officer—I might add it is a woman who was not recalled after a protracted labour dispute—and presented her list and her copies of her letters, etc., she was refused and told to go home and fill out the government form because the office was not interested in that material, that it was not relevant and had to be on the form. She was so humiliated that she returned to my office in tears and said, "I'm so disgraced, I'm so humiliated. I really, honestly, Ms. Langan, have tried". That is the kind of situation.

In speaking to the worker after that we found out she had been inundated by people that day—this was following the same announcement to which the hon. member referred—and was having to force people to follow the rules. That worker was at her wits' end. We had a