

I spoke to a young gentleman who had worked some 11 years for a dairy company. He advised me that as a result of people going across the border to purchase their dairy products eight major full-time jobs were being lost and that there were cutbacks of up to 50 people for that dairy across the province of British Columbia.

This cycle has continued. I look at this government's policies with respect to privatization and centralization of services and I wonder what the thinking is. Are we going to close down the rural areas of our country in the guise of competitiveness? In the city of Penticton a number of federal services are affected directly right now because of this government's policies. The Penticton post office, an historic institution, has just been closed down or will be closed down at the end of this week. We cannot get any assurance from Canada Post that the sorting will continue in Penticton and that its historic cancellation stamp will be retained. There are 12 jobs affected by this move, and Canada Post will not give us the assurance that those 12 jobs will not be affected. It will not give us the assurance that we will have a full service facility. In the guise of competitiveness it appears that it is going to take those positions and move them to a nearby city, probably Kelowna or Kamloops.

• (1720)

Those areas are building and building and building. Little areas like Penticton, Oliver, Osoyoos, Grand Forks, and Merritt need jobs. We are losing jobs across the border on a daily basis. Certainly now is not the time to institute these policies of centralizing government services, of shutting down services in small communities.

I look at the VLA office in Penticton, an area that covers the southern part of not only my riding but also of Kootenay West—Revelstoke and Kootenay East. Its central area office is located in the same building in which I have my office. It has over 20 employees who do a good job for the people of the area. Yet once again rumours abound: Will this be shifted out, will this be moved? Mr. Speaker, over my dead body. We will not put up with a constant erosion of the jobs that are available in our small communities, particularly now.

This bill, while looked at as a belt-tightening bill, is once again one that hurts the poor and the middle class. It is a bill that hits the one million poor I spoke of.

Mr. Speaker, look at the submissions that were made before the committee that studied this bill. It is very

clear that the long-term effects on the poor and the poverty stricken are major. The National Council of Welfare has recently reported that social assistance rates are still far below the poverty line—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please, your time is over. On questions or comments, the hon. member for Surrey North.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to my colleague's comments. I know before he was elected as a member of Parliament he was a lawyer and did a lot of work in the courts, and I am sure both in juvenile and family court. He is aware that the loss of revenue from this bill in the province of British Columbia will amount to \$1.2 billion over the next five years.

Some of the services it will affect are services for children, protection services aimed at the removal, the prevention, the cause and effect of poverty, child neglect, and dependence on public assistance. This would include services like case work, counselling, adoption, homemakers and community development, all of the things that go to protect children, to assist families in functioning better and to deal with family violence.

From the member's experience as a lawyer and working in court, what does he think the impact on services will be with the withdrawal of \$1.2 billion over a five-year period? What impact will it have on children and families, from the hon. member's experience?

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Speaker, I did work in the courts in and around the Okanagan in particular and the boundary country. The areas the member referred to would have touched me directly as I was employed on a contract basis with the province of British Columbia over approximately 11 years. I dealt with protection services, child neglect and family violence on an ongoing basis in the courts. Quite frankly, it frightens me when I think that some of the steps we were slowly getting toward for family protection services, protection of children and battered women, will either stop, slow down or be eroded.

Transfer payments of \$1.2 billion over a five-year period of time goes a long way toward assuring the type of protection for many of the families that we saw over the 11 years that I worked with protection services in the province of British Columbia.