

*Government Orders*

children, and subsidized child care for low income families so they can go out and work.

This surely is the exact opposite direction from that in which a country like Canada, one of the wealthiest in the world, wants to head. Surely we want to create opportunities so that every child can grow up with a hope of being healthy, well educated, and of contributing to the maximum of their ability to their society. Yet, that is not what happens.

This bill continues the climate of envy and greed that this government has so carefully sowed among Canadians. It fertilizes it well because what is said in this bill to provinces like Ontario, B.C., and Alberta is: "You three will be selected, out of all the Canadian provinces, to have your poor, your elderly, your children, and your needy made subject to an arbitrary limit on how much they need. Even though you three provinces contribute the funds and the wealth to allow us to equalize opportunities across this country, you will not be able to share the resources this country has for looking after its most vulnerable citizens".

We are talking a lot about concurrence now, about the abilities of different levels of government to share power and share the responsibilities in a number of fields: culture and communications, the environment, management of the economic union, and society. Yet, we have here a violation of the fundamental bargain of Confederation, which was that we will share and will treat each other equally. This bill violates that bargain.

Three years ago those of us who cautioned against the free trade deal and cautioned that it would affect our social programs were told that we were scaring the elderly and the poor with no cause whatsoever. I want to examine a pattern of changes in public policy in the area of social programs that this government has taken us through since that 1988 election.

There is the deindexing of child benefits. Who does that hurt? That hurts those in this country with the lowest income. There is a steady cut in funding for affordable housing, the lack of which has been identified as the single main cause of poverty among children and among Canadian women.

• (1610)

There is the elimination of the Rental Rehabilitation Assistance Program, which allows tenants to upgrade

rental housing, but home ownership still gets assistance from this government.

There are caps on the contributions from the federal treasury to programs for young offenders. Yet a new Young Offenders Act has been introduced which is punitive to young offenders when there are no services available.

There are cuts to family allowances and the old age security clawbacks. There is unemployment insurance. Again the poorest are being asked to make up for the cuts in training dollars that this government has carried out since its election. I say the poorest because there is a limit on how much people can contribute to unemployment insurance. Those earning the least contribute the most.

We just dealt with Bill C-20 in which we are talking about caps on our contributions to funding our health care program. Here we are again capping the Canada Assistance Plan, which is a fundamental program of our social safety network.

I say to the government that the people who were talking three years ago about free trade, about harmonizing our social programs with the levels of poverty and human degradation of our trading partner to the south, were not the ones who were scaring Canadians. It was this government that was misleading Canadians about its commitment to our social safety net, to our social system and to the dignity and respect that we believe as Canadians every human being in our society should have.

In the three years since the free trade agreement was implemented, we have moved steadily and systematically under this government toward harmonization with a social system that is inferior to us and which creates inferior human beings out of poverty.

This bill is just the latest nail in that coffin.

Here we stand, less than two weeks before Christmas, processing the second in a series of bills, but the 20th or 25th in a series of actions by this government, to further entrench poverty and dependency in this country.

Here we stand, before Christmas, with more people facing more hardship in this, one of the wealthiest nations in the world. That is not the kind of Canada those who have sat in these seats before us tried to create. It is not the kind of Canada that I hope I am here to try to create for the next and for future generations.