

Government Orders

I would appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments on this.

Mr. Bevilacqua: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

As a government we are concerned about agriculture and the benefits which we draw as a nation from the production and sale of agricultural products. There is a great willingness in the government to bring about positive change to the lives of Canadians, whether they are affected by agriculture or the deindustrialization of the manufacturing base in Ontario.

On October 25 we received a mandate for change. People were tired of working harder and earning less money. Our young people were tired and feeling really hopeless about their prospects. That is true whether they lived on a farm or in a city. People felt that the rules for membership in our society had changed. Basically they were asking for vehicles of opportunity, a way once again to participate fully in the life of the nation.

• (1310)

In the last budget and in the throne speech we began a process as a government in co-operation with the people of Canada to redesign a new vision for the nation. That is why we entered into the very extensive process of reforming Canada's social programs.

Many governments in the past shied away from that. They were afraid, perhaps of the misunderstandings, of the code words. They were afraid to face the challenge of saying to people that the systems were no longer working and new ways of giving Canada a better social security system should be looked at.

We have accepted the challenge. We have said that unemployment insurance as it exists today simply does not reflect contemporary reality. Young people have asked for a vehicle of opportunity, something to have during the transition period between school and work. Therefore we are looking at internship and apprenticeship training programs, the Canadian youth corps.

We have told small business we understand when they say too much stress is placed on them. We therefore have decreased payroll taxes, the UI premiums.

We are doing many things to make people come together rather than split apart. That was the legacy of 10 years under the Conservatives where we saw polarization of classes and people really losing hope in our country. It is our number one challenge.

A very important part of this new vision we speak and act upon every day since the October 25 election is the people who are involved in the agricultural sector of Canada. We value the commitment and dedication they have made to developing a better society for all Canadians. The challenges are great. There is no question about that.

The measures we have taken in the budget set a direction but they are interim measures. There is much work to do. We have seen that we need to modernize and restructure our economy. We have to give Canadians tools to become productive, to share in the national vision that speaks to regaining the values that made this country a great nation.

I am, as you are, extremely tired of going into cities and towns where people are lining up at food banks, where we have the problems of latchkey kids, where our young students are not looking to the future in a positive way.

Our mission is to take back our communities. Our mission is to take back our nation, to give it back to the people. Together there is great potential to increase the quality of life for everyone who resides here.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I listened with much attention to my hon. friend and his very thoughtful presentation.

Many questions could be asked but I want to take advantage of the fact that he represents a Toronto constituency. As such he knows the special burdens someone from our large urban areas has to face.

I notice that when this bill was first introduced the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure drew attention to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the tremendous contribution they make to our country, and their international reputation.

• (1315)

The freeze that was applied to the members of the RCMP along with others and the fact that no increments are allowed for two years place tremendous pressure on new constables as they leave the training facilities in Regina to go out and assume responsible positions around the country.

Their take home pay is about \$1,800 a month. Even in Kamloops which is a lot smaller than Toronto I have had constables come to me with a breakdown of their monthly expenses. Living incredibly modestly they cannot live on \$1,800 a month. That is in Kamloops. I can only imagine how much more of a problem that would be in a city like Toronto.

Would my hon. colleague consider taking back this kind of concern to the President of the Treasury Board. When one makes a freeze across a whole spectrum it might not have much of an effect on a public servant making \$120,000 a year but it certainly will impact seriously on someone who brings home \$1,800 a month and expects to raise a family on that.

Could I get some response from my friend. Will he raise with the President of the Treasury Board the plight that these new constables face in the RCMP when they are unable to have any increments when normally they would expect six increments—