

Borrowing Authority

they do not have the political courage to bring to the House of Commons some legislation to deal with this extremely sensitive issue for Canadians. That is one area where the Government is getting an *F* in its report card but there are many other areas.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Saint-Michel—Ahuntsic (Mrs. Killens) just pointed out the situation of the homeless. We have come out of the year of the homeless and what response have we had from the federal Government to deal with the killing issue for Canadians? Absolutely none. If anything, we have seen the Government divest itself of responsibility in the same way that it did with the Supreme Court judgment, namely, it passed it off to the provinces. We now have a situation where social housing in Canada is no longer under the leadership of the federal Government, but is passed off to the provinces. In fact, the only area where the federal Government has maintained sole jurisdiction has been in the area of co-operative and native housing where no kudos need to be given. This is another area where we have a total lack of leadership.

We heard the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) most recently lauding the fact that Canada is deemed to be the country among the OECD nations which has the largest growing economy for fiscal year 1987.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Ms. Copps: Government Members are applauding. But what they fail to recognize is that at the same time we have these wonderful statistics coming from the mouth of the Minister of Finance, one in five Canadian children is living in poverty. In fact, we have a situation where thousands upon thousands of children are going to school hungry, and do not have homes. What kind of response have we had from this Government?

Under tax reform, the Government put one million poor people on the tax rolls for the first time in Canadian history—on the tax rolls, Madam Speaker. The Minister of Finance through the tax measures he has introduced since 1984 has brought onto the tax rolls one million people who were never paying taxes before. Now the Minister comes out with tax reform. He actually has the nerve to stand up in the House and beat his breast, saying he has taken 850,000 off the tax rolls. What he does not tell Canadians is that he and his Government were in a position to put one million new people on the tax rolls.

An Hon. Member: What about all the new jobs that people have?

Ms. Copps: Now there are 850,000 people taken off the tax rolls. That is Tory tax reform. Take from the poor and hand out to the rich.

In our Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare, we tried to have the issue of child poverty addressed as a priority. In fact, the child poverty action group implored us to do so. The Canadian Council on Social Development and the National Council on Welfare asked us to bring forward

this issue as a priority issue. Instead, the committee on health and welfare has chosen to study mechanisms for financing health care, including trips to the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands and I think Germany. We are taking a world tour to study health care when we should be looking at the question of Canadian children who are going to school hungry and are without roofs over their heads. In 1988 in an economy as vibrant as the Canadian economy the situation is a national disgrace and a national tragedy. How does the Government expect us to pass a blank cheque for \$25 billion when it does not have the heart to care about the children in our country who are going hungry?

When the Minister of Finance is asked questions in the House about what he is doing with social policy, he just parrots OECD statistics, which do not mean a lot when you do not have bread on the table or a roof over your head.

I would like to spend a moment dealing with a much more personal issue to me. Over the years we hear many difficult and sad stories, we hear many stories that would break your heart. I had the occasion about two months ago to hear directly from a woman who did not live in my riding. She lived in a neighbouring community but had not gotten a response from her local M.P. so came to see me. She came because her son who was 17 years of age, a model student, a model volunteer, the kind of son any parent would love to have, had died. He had died after eating an apple turnover at an Arby's restaurant. The reason he died is that apple turnovers, unbeknownst to the young man, contained ground up hazel nuts, nuts so small they cannot be seen by the human eye. This young man had eaten apple turnovers at other restaurants. He had eaten them at McDonald's and at Harvey's. He assumed that an apple turnover is what it says, an apple turnover. He did not think an apple turnover was an apple and a nut turnover. He knew he had an allergy. As soon as he ate this apple turnover he started to have a reaction. He had been told by his physician that if he ever underwent an attack, which in the medical jargon is called a reaction of anaphylactic shock, that he would have time to get to the hospital. His mother told me this story. He jumped on his bicycle and pedalled home. He got in the front door and was barely speaking at that point. He was choking and losing consciousness. He asked his father for help. His mother told me that she did not even have time to say goodbye to her son because he was dead before she even had a chance to wake up. She told me that she could sue the company involved, but she does not want to do that because to sue the company will not bring her son Christian back. She said that she would like the Government to do something to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening to another young person.

• (1120)

This occurred in December. In my naivety, I believed that there are many issues that one comes across in political life, some of which are partisan and some of which are not. I felt that this was not a partisan issue. I felt that this was an issue