

*Government Orders*

We do not want things the way they used to be. We are not living in some nostalgia about the good old days because nostalgia will not help that young man get a job. Harking back to the good old days will not restore the opportunity for young children to get nurturing, proper nutrition and proper care. That is why we must take up this mission together.

[Translation]

Together we must find immediate solutions for all Canadians. Canadians are proud of their social security system, but it is clear that times have changed. Our system no longer meets requirements; the time has come to take action. Too many children live in poverty and this reality goes beyond all jurisdictions. To us, poor children are poor children whether they live in Gaspé or Medicine Hat.

• (1050)

The status quo is not an option. Changes are needed now. Some people do not want us to do, change or cut anything. Others ask us to spend more on social programs. We are also asked to eliminate the deficit. We always have to deal with contradictory requests.

I think that most Canadians would like us to make adjustments but to act carefully and intelligently. They want a new social pact for the coming decades, long-term jobs for them and their children. I think that our first responsibility as a government, as members of the House of Commons, is to look for ways to deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment.

[English]

We must do this carefully, deliberately, attentively. We must listen to the great wide voice of Canadians. Those who recommend we come in with an axe in our hands to chop, cut, slash and burn are not listening to Canadians. They are not listening to Canadians who say: "Reform, don't destroy, don't break down. Reform, do it with change, have a new blueprint". The reason is very clear. There are some sobering new facts in the Canada of today.

About 10 years ago, before I was asked to go on sabbatical in the opposition, I was the minister of employment. I have a comparison as to what was happening then and what is happening now. When I was minister of employment about 10 or 12 per cent of those who were on unemployment insurance used the system frequently, every year. Today over 40 per cent of UI users are on that program virtually every single year.

That clearly demonstrates something has fundamentally changed in the workplace. It is not simply a matter of a few people abusing the system. It means there has been an underlying revolution in the way people work in this country. Many of our traditional industries no longer provide the same employ-

ment opportunities. They are declining. People are being caught up and are being washed away from the mainstream.

That is why we must make changes. We must help them find ways back into the employment market, find ways back into the labour market. We must equip them with new tools. That is why simply having a benefit program and writing a cheque every month is not sufficient. People need to have opportunities to become more literate, to learn French, English, or mathematics so they can begin to understand the new kinds of work.

All of us get our cars repaired. Have you looked under the hood of your car recently? No longer is it a simple carburettor with a little gas and air going through it. Now there is a computer attached to it. People in the car repair sector say there are 10,000 jobs missing in Canada because we do not have trained automobile technicians with the skills to adapt to that new technology now found in our automobiles.

People ask where the jobs are. Jobs are lost in this country every day because we simply do not have the people to pass the test. Yet on the other side of the ledger there are hundreds of thousands of Canadians who want to work but do not have the skills or abilities to pass that test.

People have said to me: "I saw somebody last night from one of the social groups who asked where the jobs are". Last year 170,000 people came into Canada under our immigration program on an employment authorization because there were not sufficient people in this country with the skills we require for our economy.

People I recently met with in the software industry said there are 15,000 potential jobs in this country in the next five years but Canadians are not trained to meet those jobs. At the same time people say: "Don't put a cent into training. Don't transfer resources into where it really counts. Keep people on unemployment insurance". Is that what we really want? Is that the hope for Canadians, to stay on UI year after year? Or do we want to say to them and their kids: "We are going to give you some hope and a chance to get a job that really means something".

• (1055)

In the unemployment insurance system there is an interesting figure we should pay some attention to. Last year 14 per cent of the companies were responsible for close to 40 per cent of the UI payouts. That means that over time because of the existing system a variety of companies, both public and private, have used the UI system not to help people get jobs or make a transition but simply to pad the payroll.

A whole series of layoffs are designed to meet the duration of benefits under the unemployment insurance system. There is a massive cost subsidization taking place from one industry to another, from one region to another. They are basically saying that does not help the other regions develop their economies.