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dental care, special medications, and health related equipment. Offspring of low wage earners may be forced to go without these things if the need arises, simply because parents cannot afford such "luxuries".

The life of one single mother came to light, not long ago during a court case in Winnipeg. The court heard how the woman was reduced to pawning furniture to buy food and to stealing milk and diaper ointment. Is it not tragic when furniture is swapped for food and mothers are forced to steal? Is now not the time for the government to act and provide greater support? Witness after witness who has appeared before the subcommittee on poverty of the standing committee on health and welfare in the last two years has singled out unemployment as the primary cause of poverty. Since child poverty mirrors unemployment, the Minister of National Health and Welfare now has a unique opportunity to take up the cause of child poverty. We are now in the midst of a recession. It is not the time to blame individuals for unemployment. The government's economic policies must not bankrupt its citizens, especially its children.

• (1730)

I therefore challenge the Minister of National Health and Welfare to declare poverty our most serious public health problem. All children by definition are entitled to the average life span, to good health and to excellent education to ensure life, liberty and happiness.

I dare the minister to table in Parliament at once a plan of action, short term and long term, to lend credibility to his ministry. I dare the minister to announce soon his long overdue child care program. I dare him to convince his colleagues in cabinet to pursue a full employment policy as the chief and long-term assault on poverty, to tell them children are not small adults warranting only small budgets.

As one subcommittee witness said: "A country which is not committed to a full employment policy cannot expect employment to be the vehicle for eradicating poverty."

I agree we should spend for national defence, but should the nation not also defend our most obvious future, our children? There are two ways to protect

future generations, and this one, declaring war on poverty, should not go unrecognized.

Let the next generation of children never know the want and pain of poverty. On behalf of poor Canadian children, I challenge the minister to make a better future more than a dream for children. I dare the minister and his government to increase the minimum wage in areas of federal jurisdiction and to require that all federally funded and cost-shared programs meet the federal minimum wage as a condition of funding.

I dare the minister and his government to revisit the newly amended Unemployment Insurance Act and to restore federal financial support for this program.

I dare the minister to institute fair taxation. Canadians are asking not only what is adequate, but also what is enough. It does not make sense that a full-time child care worker should only earn \$10,000 a year, while a chief executive officer of a big corporation would be earning \$600,000 a year.

I dare the minister to look into establishing a national nutrition policy to reflect the real priorities of our Canadian poor. The minister of health, towards the end of his speech said: "We cannot afford not to fight poverty." I agree.

I therefore dare the minister to move now for a better and bright tomorrow for our poor Canadian children.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Ricard (Laval-Ouest): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the debate this afternoon I have listened to the comments made by various speakers, and I would like to put a question to the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

I have here a document which says "Canadian Job Strategy—Estimated expenditures for the Quebec region". Unfortunately, I don't have the figures for Canada as a whole. I only have those for Quebec. I have a number of data here which I will not quote at length because it would take too much time.

I listened to the speeches, Everybody said that we were cutting government subsidies, established programming, budgets, and so forth. I see here: "Job Development"; for the Quebec region, the budget for youth in 1989-90 was \$34 million. In 1990-91, it will be \$44 million. I see another one here: "Skill Shortages", a program to