

*Supply*

well-fed, and well-housed and we have gall to talk about poverty.

In my opinion, if you want to have a discussion in the middle of a Canadian winter about poverty, first of all you should have to do it outdoors, and you should have to stand around for a while in the afternoon and feel the cold. You should not be allowed to eat that day. You should not be allowed to wear warm clothing. Most importantly, you should have to do it surrounded by the poor. I would defy any of the members who have made an intervention in here this afternoon to make the same kind of a speech to those people as they have made to us. The Speaker would not be there to intervene on their behalf. The language certainly would not be parliamentary, but perhaps the message might get across.

I listened, for example, to the minister make a very finely prepared speech this afternoon. I did not hear him mention, though, that the numbers that he used are from 1989, the last year, of course, for which those numbers have been gathered. They have absolutely nothing to do with life in Canada right now in the middle of a recession.

I am as uncomfortable with the use of statistics in this kind of a discussion as I am about us having it, because the truth is in this country if one child goes to bed hungry tonight, we should all be ashamed. There is no reason for poverty in this country.

One of the things that I know is a problem for members of this Chamber is that in this town, it is pretty tough to get much of an assessment of poor people and what they are like. You really have to search them out because they are not obvious. Driving into Ottawa off Highway 416 and coming in on what is known as the South River Road, there are the kind of mansions that are rare in Canada, but they are there, and they are all around this community. There does not appear to be much poverty here, but I will put some money out that says tonight it could be found within a spitting distance of this building.

If you want to find somebody who is cold tonight, and they do not have a place to live, they will find a warm grate, I will bet within the Chambers of this building somewhere. They will find a parking garage. They will find a hallway. They will find a hotel that left the door

open. They will find somewhere where there is a delivery door that is open.

In any of our major metropolitan cities the irony is that among the luxury condominiums somebody found a way to get into a nice warm garage for the night. At our major international airports, they are not flying off to Jamaica, they are finding a hole in the wall where at least it is warm and they are there.

I will bet that within 100 yards of this building now, there is somebody who has no job and who is begging for money on the street. Tonight, they will split a bottle of wine with somebody and sleep over a heating grate. We will not see them because we probably will not get out of cars long enough to go looking for them, but someone will.

There is a great controversy in my part of Canada about where there ought to be food banks. People are saying: "Well, we want to do away with them." Yes, we do in the long run, but the problem is how do we feed people who need emergency assistance now? Our traditional ideas of who might actually use a food bank are changing immensely.

There are parts of southern Ontario that look affluent to somebody driving by, but where people have got virtually their entire income invested in a place to live and do not have any money left to feed the kids. They get to make the choice: "Do I feed the kids or do I pay the mortgage? Which do I do?" It is something that grabs you—or it ought to grab you—that in the middle of this kind of a society, in the middle of this kind of wealth, we cannot afford to feed the poor and we cannot afford to provide them with opportunities.

There are many things about government that I do not understand. I am trying to explain at the moment to a 65-year-old woman why she has to get divorced to get a pension. What makes me even more angry is that this stupid rule is not new. This is not the first time this has cropped up. When we got looking into how could such a stupid rule exist, we found that this stupid rule has been around for a while. It has been looked at and studied by bureaucrats. Recommendations have been made and laws have to be changed. How can that be? Can our society be so dumb that it does not understand the stupidity and the cruelty of a rule like that? Is our society so stupid that it does not understand what happens when a kid does not have a proper place to live? Is this some great mystery? Do we not know what happens to a poor child in an urban centre or a rural centre, when he does