

Supply

While it is good that he raised these issues, it is a little disconcerting that he would be surprised by them.

I would like to ask him a couple of questions. He talked about circulating to his constituents some indications of the budget and what that budget does. I wonder what he is saying to his constituents who earn less than \$3,750 and who will not get an extra cent out of the government's child benefits program. Did he indicate to them that that is acceptable, that the poorest of the poor will not get one extra cent out of this program?

Did he indicate to his constituents that health and welfare officials admitted that children and families whose income is derived from social assistance, welfare or unemployment insurance will be no better off under this new system than they were under the old system? The families in the worst financial situations will receive nothing in these changes.

The member will have voted along with me in favour of a resolution put forward by my former leader which called upon the House to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Does he think that these measures will have any impact at all on eliminating child poverty by the year 2000? In fact, is there anything here which is heading us in the right direction?

May I ask just one last question? Does the member not realize that the extra violence women are facing, children are facing and families are facing, the extra insecurity that families are living under, is the result of the strapped financial situations?

As we all know, more Canadian children live in poverty than at the beginning of this government's term. Does the member not understand that part of the reason for having to address the concerns of violence, more halfway houses and so on, is because of the poverty that this government has created over its last eight years?

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, it is a wide-ranging question and observation on the part of the member. I will attempt to do justice to the question.

The best thing that we can do as a country is to develop a strong and healthy economy. That is what will pull people up. We can have a wide range of programs but the

thing that will do it is a strong and vibrant economy. That is the difficulty I have at this particular point in the history of this country. We have 1.5 million unemployed in this country. The figure has not yet exceeded the last recession that we went through in 1981-82 but we cannot take too much comfort from that, can we.

The fact is we have too much unemployment and it has a huge social cost attached to it. There is a relationship between violence in the home and the hardship a particular family is facing on a day to day basis in terms of unemployment and lack of opportunity and the inability of a family to pay its bills or meet its obligations. Those are huge social costs at the end of the day.

Again I go back to the budget. The budget is not the be-all or the end-all of our problems. It is a pretty good start. It recognizes for the first time the family unit. It recognizes children as it has not in the past. That is only one component in the budget. Members have to remember that all federal programs have matching or other support programs within the provinces which help those families on the lower income scales.

• (1630)

I do not pretend that our budget did it all or will do it all, or will it ever do it all, but I think it is a good start. In conjunction with existing provincial programs I think they are working better now than they ever did in the past because we need them now.

Again, reflecting on that huge unemployment number out there, we hope it gets better, and we hope that the Canadian economy will grow as they predict it will. Every major think tank in Canada and internationally, including the IMF, predicts that Canada's economy will grow faster than any other economy in the western world this year. We hope they are correct in that, not for partisan political reasons but because that is the best we can hope for the citizens of Canada, a strong and healthy economy.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke so glowingly and with such feeling about violence against women that I expected him to end his speech by announcing that his government had decided to put some money in the budget for it. He did