

*Government Orders*

If they do not, as they have not been unfortunately, the short-term help has had to become long-term help, hence the problem we find ourselves in.

**Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise for the first occasion in the House of Commons.

As is the tradition with maiden speeches I would like to take a moment to thank my supporters who elected me on October 25. More particularly I would like to thank my campaign workers who spent many hours on my campaign. I would especially like to thank my wife for her patience, encouragement and the many sacrifices she has made in support of my campaign and my new career. Last, I would like to thank my parents for their support, guidance and encouragement over the last 37 years.

The riding of Elgin—Norfolk sits on the north shore of Lake Erie and runs approximately 100 miles east to west. It begins in a small town called St. Williams in Norfolk township and runs through to Rodney in Aldboro township.

The riding is the birthplace of many great contributors to both Canada and the world including Mitch Hepburn the former premier of Ontario. As well, the inventor Thomas Edison was born in Elgin—Norfolk. The renowned Liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith comes from just outside St. Thomas in a small town called Dutton. Last, the great Canadian, the leader of the New Democratic Party and member for Yukon also was born in Elgin—Norfolk.

Elgin county has a long agricultural tradition. It has many farms ranging from dairy farms through cattle farms, cash crops, chicken farms as well as many others.

It is also the home of an important manufacturing sector, particularly in auto related manufacturing and auto parts. The main population centre, the city of St. Thomas, is the home for the Ford Motor Company and Freightliner Truck Manufacturing.

The people of the riding of Elgin—Norfolk wait with great anticipation for the performance of the 35th Parliament of Canada. My riding has suffered a tremendous job loss through the last five years. Factory after factory has closed permanently, all in the name of global restructuring. These people are anxious to see policy changes which will increase their job security and provide hope for their future, for their community and for their children.

• (1625)

The initiatives of this Parliament must speak to the needs of the people of Elgin—Norfolk as it must speak to the real needs of all members in Canadian society. Canadians, regardless of where they live, expect that job opportunities will be created out

of economic growth and fairness in the tax system and expenditure policies of this new government.

I would like to speak for a moment about first principles. The principles of a good income support program or labour force adjustment system should include a fundamental commitment to the principles of social justice and a preferential option for those most in need. Furthermore all of our programs, including social spending, should facilitate a stable and growing economy.

The contribution that social spending makes to economic growth has often times been overlooked in economic debates. However a full discussion at this point would take me beyond my 10 minutes so I leave it for another day.

More fundamental than the principles of any government program are the principles of government. Mr. Vaclav Havel, in his first book as president of the Czech and Slovak republic, stated: "I am convinced that we will never build a democratic state based on rule of law if we do not at the same time build a state that is—regardless of how unscientific this may sound to the ears of the political scientists—humane, moral, intellectual, spiritual and cultural. The best laws and the best conceived democratic mechanisms will not in themselves guarantee legality or freedom or human rights—anything, in short for which they are intended—if they are not underpinned by certain human and social values".

My challenge for the Minister of Human Resources Development and all members of this House is that we craft programs which are both humane and moral.

Many members on both sides of the House, from all three parties, have spoken about the pressing social issues in their communities, be it the unemployed, the hungry, day care or violence in the home. I would like to add my voice to theirs and press the government to find solutions to the problems of economic hardship throughout our nation. More specifically I would like to ask the government to attack vigorously the issue of poverty, including the plight of the working poor.

Too many Canadians, many of whom are working, are experiencing long term and real financial and emotional difficulties because they have fallen below the poverty line. Our labour force adjustment strategy must ensure meaningful, well paid jobs for Canadians not part-time subsistence work that has too often been the case in the past.

Recently Dr. Shaw, a professor at the University of Toronto Medical School, estimated that health costs due to unemployment were over \$1 billion a year. To all the members here, I suggest that if we measure the health costs due to poverty it would far exceed \$1 billion. Our programs need to deal with the issue of poverty head on, both for those who are working and those who are not working.