What does it say? Perhaps it is the most chilling statistic that has been issued yet in a year of horrible bad news for Canadians and is one of the most chilling reminders. It says that the net family income for families in Canada has dropped substantially and has been gone back to a level of over 15 years ago. Whatever happened to the notion of progress? Whatever happened to the notion that people could have some expectation that they and their children would have a better life?

• (1035)

Under Tory years, we have reduced the standard of living of Canadians and created a climate of uncertainty. The human face of these statistics is borne out in the fear and the uncertainty of unemployment.

Young people with good education are having to go home and live with their parents because there are no jobs out there for them. This weekend in my riding I bumped into a young man with a masters degree in engineering who sells lottery tickets part-time. It is the only job he can get. That is what we call building a new economy, taking a highly skilled, talented young man and putting him to work selling lottery tickets part-time.

The disgrace is seen in every city and town in Canada with the food banks that are there by necessity. What a horrible commentary we hear from the member who spoke out and keeps lambasting the food banks as if they were somehow a concoction of those who want to generate employment for themselves. In my city of Winnipeg, 10,000 people a week are fed by the food banks. Many of them were in the middle class only a few short years ago but have lost their jobs, lost their employment and because of the unravelling of the safety net have fallen through to hit bottom. Now their only recourse is to live on social assistance.

These people are looking for some answers and some solutions. They had hoped the budget would provide at least a blueprint that would set out some incentive to create employment and some incentive to create jobs.

Is it not fascinating that we are told as we watch the Conservative leadership race that we are now in the era of the new politics. Is it not interesting that the new politics does not include the unemployed. I have yet to hear one leadership candidate in the Conservative campaign talk about the fact that there are close to two million Canadians unemployed. The minister's own figures predict that this tragic disaster which affects virtually every family in this country will continue for the next five years.

Have we heard one leadership candidate in the Conservative campaign talk about the enormous suffering, tragedy, anguish and pain that unemployment provides right across the board?

An hon. member: No we have not.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Not once have we heard it.

It is not just the budget that is a disgrace; it is the Conservative Party that is a disgrace because it refuses to recognize the harsh reality of what is taking place in this country.

We know what the agenda is. We heard it last week in Calgary. The minister of defence is now saying that the only solution to the health care problem is to apply user fees.

Mrs. Sparrow: She did not say that.

Mr. McDermid: She did not say that. That is not true. That is not what she said.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Well, she said it yesterday. "I am going to experiment with user fees". Is it not interesting that here we have a budget—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Now listen to them. Now we have Conservatives across the way totally and completely rejecting the position of the minister of defence. They will have their opportunity. Vote against her. They will have every chance to tell her she is wrong. Vote against her.

The fact is that the budget should have been addressing the serious problems of our health care system. It should have been looking at ways in which we could provide restraints on costs and proper funding. There is not one word in the budget about the serious problems in our health care system. The only answer we get, the only way the minister of defence defines the problem is to make people pay more for it, to break the fundamental principle of it. She said in that twisted sense of principle: "I do not like user fees, but I am prepared to have them".