

Supply

The legacy of freedom, the tradition of freedom we have in this country allows us to deal with that other side, the human side of ensuring we are also a society which is compassionate. I do not believe it is a choice between either defending our country from abroad or contributing to international affairs, or doing what we need to do here at home.

Mr. Mills: I never said that.

Mr. Beatty: My hon. friend said that he was not making that suggestion and I take him at his word, but when he made reference to the Prime Minister sending troops off to the Middle East I was concerned that he was suggesting, as some others previously have, that we should have been holding back and not spending money in the defence of freedom on the grounds that somehow we could not afford to do it.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to ignore either the cause of freedom, or the cause of fighting poverty. Both must be a priority for us. Both deserve the attention of this House.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I think most Canadians understand and certainly everyone in this House understands that children are poor because they live in poor families. They live in a family where the parents are poor. In many of those homes it is a single mother who is trying to raise her family. Of all of the poor children in Canada, almost 65 per cent of those poor children are in homes led by a single mother.

We have to look at what this government has done over the last six years. The things that this government has done have made it more difficult for that single mother, or that poor working family to try to bring their children up. What have we seen? We have seen a government that brings in a GST which will impact more heavily on the working poor and the poorer people of this country. We have seen a government that has brought in UI cuts which will impact very negatively on women in the workforce because we all know, Mr. Speaker, that women are in and out of the workforce more frequently than men and this bill will have an even more severe impact on women.

We have seen a government that has deindexed family allowance which has increased the child poverty rate. We have seen a government that brings in a "now you see it, now you don't" kind of child care policy, a minimum wage that is miserly, and I guess the final crashing blow

in my province of British Columbia, in Ontario, and in Alberta, is this government putting a cap on the Canada Assistance Plan. It makes it impossible for those provinces, they say, to raise welfare rates. It makes it impossible or much more difficult for shelters to be built for battered women, for child care spaces to be made.

I would ask the minister what is it he is really saying to the mothers of children in this country, particularly the single women who are trying to raise their children at poverty levels. What are you really saying to them with the actions you have taken, in particular the capping of the Canada Assistance Plan?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. minister has one minute to answer all those questions.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, what we are saying to those families is that it is vital, first of all, that we ensure that those children inherit an economy that is soundly managed, that the sort of policy advocated by the hon. member opposite of stealing from our children by simply spending money, running up the national debt higher and higher, year after year, would put a crippling burden upon them and threaten the very existence of the social programs that are so important.

The hon. member refers to the GST. If she were candid with the House she would concede the fact that families earning under \$30,000 a year are better off because of the GST tax credit. The hon. member refers to unemployment insurance. If she were candid with the House or with the poor of Canada she would note the fact that what we are doing is providing for better assistance to families to train to give them secure, decent jobs to be able to get themselves out of poverty.

She talks about the cap on CAP. If she did so, she would recognize the fact that what we have done is continue to increase spending. On child care, it has increased under CAP at the rate of about 20 per cent per annum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret the hon. minister's time has expired.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Debate. The hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Mike Breagh (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to join in this debate, but I confess to you I am uncomfortable, as all of us should be when we are well-clothed,