

Supply

Social housing also took a direct hit and suffered a funding cut while the Co-op Housing Program was eliminated. Indeed, the 1992 budget fails to meet Canadian women's dreams and aspirations. They will continue to face the inequitable and grim realities.

Therefore, through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask this government to resign.

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is quite simple. The member opposite in the Liberal Party condemned the government for cutting funding to the Court Challenges Program, social housing and some other programs.

I would like to ask the member what taxes he would raise to fund those programs.

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the government member would ask such a question. He assumed the Liberal caucus would like to see taxes raised. It is such a fallacious premise that his question does not deserve an answer. It is an insult to Canadians. There is a beautiful principle expounded by the United Nations that when resources are limited, you have to reallocate resources and make priorities. Our priorities are the children and women of this country.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives, an increasing number of women and children have joined the ranks of the poor. It is a fact that if poverty strikes parents, it strikes their children as well, and it is also a fact that a disproportionate number of women are found among the most economically disadvantaged in our society. No form of poverty is acceptable, but the alarming number of single-parent families headed by women that lack the bare minimum to survive is intolerable. The Canadian government told Canadians to expect a realistic budget. The Tory reality is that 2.3 million people in this country are on welfare, 1.5 million are unemployed, 3.8 million, including one million children, do not have the bare necessities of life and more than 60 per cent of mothers who are on their own, divorced, separated or single, are poor.

The 1992 Tory budget does nothing to deal with the problem of poverty in this country or to improve women's quality of life. In fact, the budget contains a number

of measures that are particularly hard on women and children. Let me explain.

First of all, the Mulroney government broke its eight-year old promise to implement a national child care plan which would have given women and children a chance to get out of the poverty cycle. The government is misleading when it tells Canadians it had to choose between child care services and programs for children at risk.

The president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Glenda Simms, exposed the flaw in the government's reasoning when she said that child care services are a way to ward off danger. Why does the government see abused and poor children as different from those who need safe and affordable day care? We know the government has cut more than \$3.5 billion from the family allowance envelope since 1986. Its child benefit measure will not help fight poverty. This benefit will be of no use to abandoned or single mothers on welfare. Since the child benefit is not indexed, its value will go down, and we have the same amount of money we had before, except that the packaging is somewhat different.

Another item. The budget scrapped the Court Challenges Program, implemented in 1985, which gives women, minorities and disadvantaged groups the funding they need to defend their cases before the courts, as provided under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Since the program was established, there have been a number of landmark judgments, including the Forest case which led to the reinstatement of language rights for Franco-Manitobans.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is merely a mechanism that can be used to abolish discriminatory legislation. It does not guarantee individuals the resources they need to challenge legislation that prevents them from exercising their rights before the courts. Without the funding provided under the Court Challenges Program, the rights in the charter have no real meaning for disadvantaged groups.

[English]

Bertha Wilson, the very famous and renowned judge who just left the Supreme Court this past year said that the Court Challenges Program, which was axed in this budget, was an imaginative and worthwhile program and should be saved.