

Government Orders

This Conservative government is so afraid of losing its spot at the top that it is playing for time by destroying the lives of thousands of people at the bottom of the economic ladder. The truth is the government has no agenda, but it does not have the guts to call an election now and it does not care how many lives will be destroyed in its effort to cling to power over the next few months.

The Prime Minister used to say that every Canadian government had a moral responsibility to call an election after four years in power. This government has been in power more than four years, but that promise, like every other promise of the Prime Minister, has turned to dust.

The truth is that this motion underlines to Canadians the truth that this Conservative government is morally, philosophically and politically bankrupt and bereft of ideas. It is a tired old government that has run out of steam, has nothing new to offer and is flailing around like a cornered rat.

I could read the statistics. Long term unemployment rose from 425,000 to 806,000 Canadians. The number of part-time workers who would like to be working full time, involuntary part-time workers, rose from 409,000 to 662,000 people. The number of people who have given up rose from 101,000 to 141,000. The number of unemployed parents supporting children rose from 305,000 to 444,000. The hours lost by people who would like to be working longer hours, but who have shortened their hours to keep their companies and their fellow workers working, increased by 52 per cent.

[*Translation*]

According to the statistics, in Montreal alone 215,000 people are unemployed. At this very moment, one out of four persons in Montreal is living on unemployment insurance benefits or welfare.

• (1210)

In this region, 615,000 people are living below the poverty line.

[*English*]

These are beyond statistics. Last week in my office I had the opportunity of meeting with an unemployed steel worker and his wife. His name is Andy McQuarrie.

He says that I can talk today about his circumstance. I think that his circumstance reflects the circumstances of thousands of other Canadians. He is a 54 year-old man who worked for a company for 21 years. He was a good employee. That company, Canadian Building Systems, went south. The member for Winnipeg South says: "Lay it on".

Andy McQuarrie would like to know what this government is doing for a 54 year-old man with 21 years of service to his company, who not only is suffering from the government's cutbacks on unemployment, but who finds himself at the age of 54 with a 16 year-old daughter at home that he is trying to support. He has a wife and family and an education level that is not great because he left school for the work force at grade nine. At age 54, with a slight hearing problem and a back problem, he is told that he should get retrained and get back and become a productive member of the work force.

Andy McQuarrie wants to work. Andy McQuarrie has been out there every day. He sold his house because he could not afford the mortgage and this month he cannot afford to pay his rent. There are literally thousands of people like Andy McQuarrie who were looking to this government last week for some hope, who were looking for a sign, a signal that maybe Bill Clinton's change in economic thinking in the United States will trickle over to Canada. What he saw instead was a government that was prepared to penalize the down to try and ensure that they are out.

Our message to this government is that it is about time that it is out. We hope that this non-confidence motion will pass so that some Canadians will finally understand that every member in this Parliament does not support the heartless move of this government as enunciated by the Minister of Finance last week.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what my colleague said, which affects everyone, even the member for Winnipeg, despite her silly comments earlier.

This morning, I too contacted my riding office before coming here and almost all cases this morning were constituents who came to say: "Mr. Boudria, you are in