

Supply

tax strategy which is gradually killing off working families in this country.

Between 1984 and 1991, total income taxes for working poor families increased 60 per cent. Under the so-called Tory tax reform, total income taxes increased 60 per cent for working poor families, while high income families saw their income taxes fall by 6.4 per cent.

Mr. Belsher: How many families no longer pay any income tax?

Ms. Copps: It is no wonder that the Gallup poll published today shows that Canadians have no faith in this government's capacity to equalize the tax burden, because they have seen six years of gouging of working poor families and six years of increases to high income families.

Let us look at one specific Conservative initiative. I know the Minister of National Health and Welfare is going to have a chance very shortly to bring out another recycled version of his child care program. I think it will be the sixth or seventh version of the same promise that was made in 1984.

I would like to ask the government why in the context of its child care policy does it continue to support a tax deduction system which benefits high income Canadians to a much greater degree than low income Canadians?

Surely, Mr. Speaker, when you are talking about providing benefits to working families to pay for decent child care for their children, it should be important to target those finances, to target that care toward families who most need the help.

I do not understand a tax system that says if you earn \$60,000 or \$80,000 a year, you are entitled to more assistance to put your child in child care than a family that is earning \$30,000 or \$40,000. I hope that as part of the minister's new package of reforms, he will transfer tax deductions into tax credits so that those families who really need the help will get the help when it comes to child care funding. That is only part of the problem that we will be addressing more specifically in some of the presentations that have to come.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, before going into any details, I think we should recognize the fact that the minimum wage system

is shocking. The answer given by the Minister of Labour in the House today is shocking, because it shows the federal government has the lowest minimum wage in this country. The minister explained that only 1.3 per cent of the population was affected. Mr. Speaker, whether one person, 1,000 people or 100,000 people are affected, this kind of injustice is entirely unacceptable!

Ten years ago, the federal government had a very progressive minimum wage policy. Today, we are even worse than British Columbia, Newfoundland and all the other provinces. Their minimum wage is higher than the federal government's, where the minimum wage has remained set at \$4 since 1986.

Perhaps hon. members would like to consider the following: Can they afford to wait four years until their next raise? I don't think they would be prepared to wait four years. So I think we can hardly say this to people who are earning the minimum wage, whatever their numbers. I also think the Minister of Labour should clarify the comment he made in the House that this affected people who worked part-time and they did not want to eliminate part-time jobs. Do we want to make wage slaves out of women, Mr. Minister, because by forcing them to work for \$4 an hour, this is practically—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret the hon. member's time has expired. Questions or comments?

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question. I congratulate my colleague, the member for Hamilton East, on a fine speech. She made some comments with regard to minimum wage and the fact that the federal government should be leading rather than following. She was also mentioning when her time was finished that most of those persons on minimum wage salaries are women. I would ask her if maybe she could complete her statement, if she would do so, to continue enlightening us on her statement.

Also in her speech she referred to a document that she wished to table. Some members of the House preferred not to have it tabled. I was wondering whether she could divulge the contents of that document as well if she could find time.