

*Government Orders*

Apart from the human impact of this, what does it mean financially? The provinces, generally speaking, have to pay a higher interest cost for borrowing than does the federal government, and a much higher proportion of their borrowing has to take place outside of Canada than is the case for the federal government. Therefore, for a whole range of macro-economic reasons it is also suicidal for the financial and economic health of the country. It also wreaks havoc on the lives of ordinary Canadians who find themselves in unfortunate situations.

Why is the government so determined to pursue this kind of policy? We know there are debt problems here. There are debt problems all over the country for respective governments. Except for sheer partisan political reasons, why should it dump the costs on to those jurisdictions that have to pay a higher cost for money than would be the case if that money were to be borrowed by the federal authority? It just makes no sense from any vantage point, except for partisan politics.

Surely the matter of the welfare of hundreds of thousands of ordinary Canadians deserves a secondary consideration. While this government is doing this, it is also taking other actions that are going to make the same matters worse for a number of other reasons.

Just yesterday in the press we saw an announcement that the federal government was going to be cutting off funding for the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. Some people on the other side may wonder what that has to do with Bill C-32. One of the areas of research that CCOHS has been very involved with in terms of industrial health and safety has to do with preventing the kind of sickness, preventing the kind of injuries that cause people to go on to income assistance by levels of government, by compensation boards and by social assistance. Many of them will not for one reason or another qualify for workers' compensation benefits.

Again, the government seems intent for whatever reason to take financial actions which will result in more and more people going on to the welfare rolls at the same time as it is cutting back on what in past years the government has claimed to be its legitimate share of the cost of social services.

• (1640 )

It is irresponsible and it is wrong and economically and financially, it just does not make sense.

In closing, I would simply hope that over the Christmas season, regardless of what happens to the motion before us at report stage today, the government perhaps may be visited by three spirits and like Scrooge turn over a new leaf over the Christmas holidays and when we come back present all of the people of Canada with a gift, and that is not to proceed with Bill C-32.

That would be blessing us, every one, and in this pre-Christmas season that is what I would ask the government to consider.

**Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean):** Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to stand here and speak to report stage of Bill C-32, an act to amend the Canada Assistance Plan.

Although I had spoken to this bill earlier I would like to speak again because today I would like to address the issue of child poverty in particular.

Through this legislation the government will cap the Canada Assistance Plan transfers to three provinces, Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. Obviously the federal government must believe that there is no poverty in these three provinces. I think that we can all attest to the fact that poverty exists in just about every region of this country, and certainly my province of Ontario is not any different than the others.

The Canada Assistance Plan was enacted in 1966 to assist and encourage the development and expansion of social assistance and welfare services throughout Canada. Under the plan, the federal government agreed to share 50/50 the costs incurred by the provinces and municipalities in providing social assistance and welfare services to needy Canadians. The people who benefit most from this plan are those who are the most vulnerable in our society, those who suffer from poverty, neglect, disability, the homeless, the elderly, abused children, abused women, low income families. More often than not it is the children who suffer the most. Currently there are over one million poor children in this country.

This Christmas close to 300,000 children will go hungry. UNICEF has said that Canada's proportion of children living below the poverty line has increased over the past couple of years, and yesterday we saw that the