

*The Address—Mr. Gauthier*

If the Prime Minister had just looked out the window on the other side, he would have been very much inspired by the people I have the honour to represent, the people of Ottawa—Vanier.

There is not a single Member in this House who has not visited my riding. They all know my riding. It is rather special. It is probably the only riding you can reach on foot in a few minutes and which offers good hotels, a convention centre, wonderful museums, an interesting market, courteous and smiling people, and, as in many other ridings, problems that are difficult to solve, because we also have our poor, our needy, our drug addicts, all those people who depend on us for their survival. I have two soup kitchens, Meals on wheels, I have two places where people can get some food, so-called food banks. It isn't easy for a society to admit that it has to dispense food in a country as rich, as full of resources, and as envied as ours.

Mr. Speaker, at the foot of Parliament Hill, just a five-minute walk away, mothers are looking for decent shelter for their children. There are the unemployed and senior citizens—there are 7,500 in my riding—senior citizens who had a difficult time, having experienced the Depression and two World Wars, and now, in many cases, depend on us today for their food and board. There are young people who have lost hope and are involved in drugs and prostitution. They are among the most disadvantaged in our society. They are the forgotten, the neglected Canadians.

Today, our social safety net, and more specifically, our unemployment insurance system, is increasingly at risk because it is in the hands of a Government that does not understand. In my riding they would say this is a Government without a heart.

In the Throne Speech, the Government claimed it wanted to improve the unemployment insurance program's, and I quote:

. . .effectiveness and its fairness.

Now that they have shown their true colours and have proposed their amendments, I cannot help wondering, quite sincerely: Who and what do they have in mind?

I know the number of jobless will increase, as the number of welfare recipients, which will in fact go up dramatically in the next few months. I also know that people will have to wait in line in front of the Sainte-Brigitte Center, in my riding, or in front of the soup kitchen

and the Salvation Army where the poor seek haven, people who have no shelter, no place to sleep.

The government has not clearly defined its goals. They want, on the one hand, to tighten the rules in order to limit the number of workers eligible to UI benefits. Workers will have to work longer before becoming eligible and then they will receive fewer benefits. Unable to get unemployment insurance benefits, the jobless through no fault of theirs will wind up on welfare. As we know, Mr. Speaker, welfare services are a provincial responsibility. So, the government is in fact transferring to the provinces a difficult human problem instead of closely examining it.

Moreover, the expenses incurred by the provinces for welfare will not appear on the balance-sheet of the federal government. Instead, its financial statements may show that they were successful in reducing the deficit. But in fact the public will be misguided because of a little game of hide and seek. The government is passing a problem on to the provinces when in fact they should have solved it since they have the means to do so, Mr. Speaker.

All in all, the taxpayers will not save a penny. Quite the opposite, since they will probably pay more with the federal tax the government has been promising. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) is travelling across the country, saying: "You can expect a tax hike!" I even remember, Mr. Speaker, the fiscal reform he proposed, and the sales tax which will apply to almost all services.

In my riding, people are concerned because during the election we discussed those problems, they came up during door calls. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the proposed sales tax is a problem to them, because it is regressive. It applies to everyone regardless of income level. The poor will pay a sales tax just as the rich. Oh, there is to be income tax credits and sales tax credits, of course there will be a system in place! At home in Ottawa—Vanier, Mr. Speaker, I have people who are honest but do not always understand those forms sent by the Government that must be filled to quality for all sorts of credits, all sorts of rebates. And often the poor are the losers, because the rich, bankers, businessmen will not hurt—they have accountants who prepare their tax returns. The poor will be the losers, Mr. Speaker, they will be penalized. Unfortunately, we have not yet the resources in place to help those people.