

*Government Orders*

al burden on the province and the taxpayers of Ontario right now, when there are record numbers of unemployed which continue to grow, bankruptcies skyrocketing and hundreds of thousands of jobs are lost to south of the border, just belies credibility.

In conclusion, I would hope that government members opposite have taken note of what they have heard over the Christmas holidays. The government determines which bill gets up here on any given day. I would hope that it would come to its senses and stop penalizing those whom it has put in positions of poverty and that it would take this bill and allow it to die on the Order Paper.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, recently I put out a householder in my riding in which I was talking about the thrill it was to be associated with members of Parliament in this House of Commons and the different sort of experiences we have listening to and debating with one another.

I want to say that it is always a constructive experience listening to my colleague from Dartmouth, because he delivers a message that is succinct and to the point. His passion is such that he gives hope to the Canadians out there who are really looking to this Chamber for hope.

I wanted to point out, being a member from Ontario, a couple of little points. First, he mentions that people are poor in Newfoundland and they are also poor in Toronto. That is the case, but I want to say that \$10,000 a year in Newfoundland goes a lot further than \$10,000 in Toronto.

In my riding a single mother was being evicted from a basement apartment the other day. It was costing her \$1,100 a month just for a basement apartment. Sometimes when we talk about Ontario or Toronto we imagine that everybody is rich, we imagine that everybody somehow manages to get through. That is not true any more. If I sounded a little aggressive earlier today when I was saying that the issue was getting people back to work, it is only because unemployment insurance payments and welfare payments do not work in the city of Toronto.

• (1610)

They do not work because they do not even cover the rent in 90 per cent of the cases, never mind clothing and food. That is why those of us in Toronto maybe for the

first time in our lives are experiencing what many other regions of the country have experienced on a cyclical basis, sometimes yearly during different seasons when there is high unemployment.

I would like to remind, with kindness, my colleagues that the suffering which is going on in Toronto right now is good in one sense because it is making us aware of what is going on in the maritimes which maybe in the past we had not quite realized. I just wanted to mention that.

**Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Mr. Speaker, I am fully cognizant of the fact that poverty is a relative thing. For those who find themselves in poverty, being from the great peninsula of Newfoundland, that wonderful province, or from metropolitan Toronto, the sting is no less severe.

People are looking for hope. They want a reason to believe that things will get better. Social assistance is not the answer. Surely giving social assistance at a rate that is 50 per cent does differ. A family of four, the average in Canada, at \$26,000 or \$27,000 is still considered below the poverty line. Look at the actual percentage of welfare payments, social assistance, making up the poverty line. If \$27,000 is the poverty line in Ontario even with full social assistance benefits, those people are still 52 per cent below the poverty line.

We spend a lot of money but we keep people poor. We do not give them hope and in many cases we give them just enough to survive in misery and squalor. That is all we do.

I wish to make a comment on the UI system. Certainly the UI system should not be a supplement for good job creation programs. Even the UI system, which is meant to be a net when people get in an economic decline, is meant to be there for a period of time, whether two weeks or six months and hopefully not much longer, so that people can get on with their lives if there is a particular economic downturn in their area. Go to Newfoundland and talk to my colleague from Labrador. He has been in this House a long time and he has never seen people go hungry before in his riding. He sees them hungry today because the government last year made a decision on Bill C-21 that it was going to alter the UI system and it was going to penalize those people who had to rely on UI for a period of time.