

Government Orders

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I do not imagine that that motion gives me unlimited time tonight to speak as long as I want. I will respect the normal time limit on speeches.

However, as I was sitting here preparing to speak on a bill that authorizes the borrowing of \$24 billion, I was thinking, what are we going to do with that money? What are we creating? I tend to think often in terms of what are we creating for our children.

I think this country, our history, everything we have achieved has been based on having an eye on the future, constantly having a vision of where we are heading, what we hope to accomplish, where our place is in the world. It started long ago at the time of Confederation when we had this crazy and wonderful dream that somehow this handful of people living in the eastern part of the north half of the North American continent could create a country that would eventually spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans and to the Arctic Ocean.

It seemed like an unachievable dream but people believed in it and they started investing in it because they knew what it could mean for the future. They saw the expanse of a continent with vast resources, tremendous natural beauty and all kinds of potential.

We invested in a transportation system. Later we invested in a communications network. Still later we started investing in a social network so that the people who lived in the various climates of this country, the various parts of Canada, could share opportunities together and could have a sense of belonging because somehow different though we were, far from each other as we were, we all shared a common purpose as a nation. We all shared a common commitment to our future together.

When I was leaving high school, it was a wonderful time to be leaving high school. No young person coming out of school, whether they were going on to university or starting to work, really had to wonder whether they were going to be able to get a job and earn an income. The opportunities were there in Canada at that time, lots of opportunities.

Yet we are at a time now where when I talk to my constituents, when I listen to them on the telephone, when I go to meetings and I talk casually to people in a shopping centre on a Saturday afternoon, what do I hear? I hear fear, I hear despair, I hear cynicism, I hear anger. Mostly I hear fear, fear about whether we are

going to have a future, fear about whether there will be opportunities for our children, fear about whether we are going to be able to breathe the air that protects our earth, fear about whether we can trust our elected representatives and our political leaders to manage our resources wisely so that for the next 125 years, as for the past 125, Canadians can believe in the future, can believe in equality, can believe in sharing and can believe in opportunities for all our children.

This budget, perhaps more than any other, feeds that sense of fear because it really turns a blind eye to the main concerns of Canadians and to the main challenges that confront us in the next year. It turns a blind eye to the more than 1.5 million Canadians who are unemployed, to another 2.5 million who are living on social assistance and to all the spouses and children of those individuals who are also caught in that trap of no hope and no fulfilment through employment in our society.

I talked to seniors which I met in my constituency office last Friday afternoon who are worried that now that the co-op program has been cancelled, the co-operative they built together for themselves half a dozen years ago will somehow be deprived of subsidies and that they will not be able to afford to live in the housing that they built under the co-operative housing program.

I see that the spending on social housing is going to be limited to an increase which may be lower than the rate of inflation and indeed their fears about whether they can continue to live in the housing that they built themselves may indeed be valid.

I see words being used that do not really describe the situation. I see what I can best call duplicity in this budget. People are concerned about the environment. The government knows this is one of the main concerns of Canadians. It also knows it is one of our main economic opportunities to create a special area of Canadian expertise in the global marketplace. Yet we have the green plan that was going to be the government's great contribution to saving the environment and suddenly the expenditures for that program are being re-profiled. Now you can re-profile upward or you can re-profile downward. Why does the government not simply say honestly: "We are not putting the money into the green plan because we do not believe in it. It was a nice little public relation gesture but if it is going to cost us money we are not going to invest in the environment".