

*Government Orders*

As I begin speaking today, I want to pay special tribute to many of the women I have worked with over the years. I have found tremendous strength among women living in poverty trying to raise their children and trying to plan to get out of that poverty trap to create new opportunities for themselves and their children only to butt themselves up against a system that makes it hard for them to do that.

The fundamental principle of liberalism is the dignity and worth of every individual. Canadians heard the Prime Minister and Liberal candidates across the country speak on that theme time and time again. It is central to the red book and to the economic and social programs that we put forward in the red book and that we are all now intending to implement through this Parliament.

However, believing in the dignity and worth of every individual also means making sure that as a society we create the opportunities for every individual to achieve their full potential and to use that to their personal benefit, to the benefit of their family, friends, community and country. Far too much inhibits that now.

I had the privilege of attending the pre-budget consultation in Toronto last week and hearing a speech by a former deputy minister of this government, Arthur Kroeger, in which he talked about the rising benchmark of unemployment that has been set in each decade of the last half of this century, rising from approximately 4 per cent in the fifties to over 6 per cent in the sixties to plus 9 per cent in the seventies and to 10 per cent to 11 per cent in the eighties. It obviously seems stuck at that point for the moment.

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What has also happened is that the middle class has disappeared into an economic polarization of our society. Some people have moved up into higher paying, more secure, more skilled jobs, and more have moved down into less skilled, lower paying jobs and that bottom level seems to be declining.

I have also had the privilege recently of reading a publication called "The Canadian Women's Budget" which talks about how the policies of the previous government over the last five years have further exacerbated that polarization of Canadians. A family of two parents earning \$20,000 a year, a pretty low income we would all agree with two children, is now paying more than three times the taxes it did. A middle income family is paying 15 per cent more and the wealthiest Canadians are paying less than 4 per cent more.

As I look at the need to be frugal, to make the best use of the fiscal resources we have, to move toward a balanced budget, I also want to move toward balance in the budget and who is

benefiting from the kinds of programs we have and who is being left on the sidelines in an increasingly harsh world.

The poverty of children in our society is one of those things that perpetuates a poorer and poorer society and fewer and fewer opportunities for people to develop their talents, their abilities and their skills and make the contribution they want to make and are capable of making.

We know that children growing up in poverty are more likely to drop out of school, more likely to be illiterate, more likely to get sick, more likely to commit suicide. Poverty is a fundamental issue that we as a society are not addressing.

I mentioned that I have dealt with poor women, single parents, trying to raise their children, trying to create a better opportunity for themselves. There is no scheme for them to gradually move from dependency to independence. They are punished if they try to. They lose benefits that are essential to the security of their children.

I am a woman who has raised three children. Most of the women I have worked with will sacrifice their own dignity for the sake of the security of their children. We have to make sure that we are not forcing them to make that choice.

We know that more women than men are poor. We have to ask ourselves how we have allocated our resources in the past as a society so that has happened, so that there is a segment of our society consistently poorer and significantly poorer than society at large. It has not happened by accident, it has happened by specific policy decisions. What is there in our social programs and in other programs of government that has allowed that to happen, and in fact that has led to it happen?

I want to talk about the need to look at special needs in our society. In the last government a project sat on the desk of the minister of employment that for \$26,000 a person would have taken people with disabilities and trained them to work in the high tech industry in which there is a desperate need for people with the skills that this particular group of unemployed would have been given. The government sat there and did not move on that project.

I have been involved with training programs. I see how desperately they are needed and wanted in communities. I talk about a restaurant that a community group actually started as a business so it could use that business and re-invest the income from that business in training. I can count in the hundreds for a very small investment of federal dollars the young men and women who have come through that program, who have established careers for themselves, who have turned their lives around completely.

I want to talk about something we learned through those kinds of programs. I hope this review goes to some of the fundamental