

Supply

An hon. member: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): No, I am sorry. There is no agreement.

Ms. Copps: I am sorry Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I am sorry. The hon. member has no agreement to have the document tabled. There was no agreement. Debate.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of National Health and Welfare is disagreeing, let him stand up and say so. The Speaker asked the question and everyone agreed. There was silence.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seeks to table, with unanimous consent, what is simply a partisan list of rhetoric. If the hon. member wants to do that, she can easily either include it in her speech or she can put out a press release.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret that the hon. member does not have unanimous consent. She is on debate.

Ms. Copps: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry the Minister of National Health and Welfare does not think it is important for Canadians to have a sense of just how deeply his government has cut. I can understand why he does not want to because it is a shameful record.

I was the one who was shocked when I actually sat down and read in black and white the depths and level of cuts to social programs across the country over the last six years, to housing programs and to food programs. It is no wonder that the Minister of National Health and Welfare would not want to have that information on the record. It is a harbinger of more ills to come under his government. He certainly has done very little in his new capacity to try to alleviate the situation.

Given that he is unprepared to look at the facts that the opposition wants to lay before the House, would he consider the facts about the federal minimum wage? The federal wage has not been raised in the last four years. How many members of the House would like to go four years without a pay raise? How many would like to go four years without a raise? The federal government has gone since May 26, 1986, without a single increase to a pathetic and pitiful minimum wage of \$4 an hour.

Alberta has a higher minimum wage of \$4.50 an hour. British Columbia, which is not known for labour enlightenment, has a minimum wage of \$5 an hour. Manitoba's is \$4.70. New Brunswick's is \$4.50. Newfoundland's is \$4.25 and we know the difficult economic conditions in Newfoundland. In the province of Ontario, as of June 1, 1990, the minimum wage is \$5.40 an hour. In Prince Edward Island it is \$4.50 an hour. In Quebec it is \$5.00 an hour. In Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories it is \$5. In Yukon territory it is \$5.39.

When we asked the legitimate question in the House today of the Minister of Labour as to why the federal government had the lowest minimum wage in Canada, he actually had the gall to respond that it covered so very few people and since those people were part-time, he did not want to eliminate their jobs. That is the same kind of rationale that was originally used to buttress the rationale for slavery. The rationale was that minimum employment standards could not be introduced for fear of cutting out jobs in the cotton fields.

Even if the minimum wage covers only 1.3 per cent of the federal working population, at least the federal government should send a signal to provinces across the country that we are not followers, but rather we are leaders when it comes to providing support and, in particular, income support for the working poor.

One of the great fallacies of our generation is the fact that people who are living in circumstances of poverty are doing it because they do not want to pick themselves up by their bootstraps and work. The Macdonald royal commission on the economic condition of Canada discovered that over 50 per cent of people living in poverty in the country are in fact working.

• (1600)

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the others who are not working outside the home are primarily women who are working inside the home and who are making a valuable and equal contribution to the state of not only the Canadian economy, but also to the psyche of Canada.

What we have on the government side is a deliberate decision to undercut the capacity of working Canadians to support themselves and their families, not only by specific cuts in programs, but also by a tax policy and a