

Supply

Forty per cent of the users of food banks are children. Seven hundred thousand children in this country rely on food banks for their daily food. The Prime Minister stands in this House and argues about how many children are poor, how many people have been raised above the poverty line and how many children are in fact living in poverty. The fact of the matter is that we have 700,000 children who rely on food banks for their food. He does not see their faces. He does not see thin children trying to laugh while their tummies are empty. He does not see the grades at school or hear their teachers scold them for not paying attention.

Those of us who think that hungry children are not our problem are being selfish. We are also being very, very wrong. For this is the future of our country. These children wear a gaunt and a grim face. It is the face of a child who is unable to finish school. Thirty per cent of the children who enter school in this country do not go through to graduation.

Montreal's rates of low birth weight rival parts of the developing world. In Manitoba, we know that children have died of disease related to malnourishment. Children are poor because their parents are poor. Sixty per cent of the poor in Canada are women and this budget entrenches again the feminization of poverty.

I urge this government to do something positive for women. Reinstate the Court Challenges Program. Reinstate the money for training programs so that people can learn how to do the jobs that are out there, instead of being stuck in a rut with no skills or skills that are no longer needed. Implement a child care program that meets the needs of Canadian children.

This government is always talking about competitiveness. If that is the only term that the government understands, why does it not look at how we are falling behind European countries in terms of child care, parental leave, education and training?

Let us get competitive with the Europeans on those issues. They are becoming more and more competitive because they do understand that workers have children, that workers need skills to do their jobs and that people are not born just to serve business interests but that business must also take the needs of people into account.

This budget, like this government, fails women. During times of restraint it is especially important to maintain and enhance equality rights. To do any less is to foster hatred and resentment.

Canadians need each other now more than ever. We have to work together to overcome these hard times. We have to learn about each other, respect one another and help each other. We need to care about each other and not just about our own pocketbooks or our own children.

All children in Canada no matter where they live, no matter what their colour, no matter what their physical abilities, are all our children. They are our present and our future, they are our responsibility and we cannot afford to fail them. We cannot afford to fail their parents. To do so is to put our future and the future of this country at peril. We will be judged by the choices we make.

I urge this government to start making the right choices, choices that offer women, children and the men of this country hope. This is a budget that says to the women of Canada: "No pay equity. No Court Challenges Program. No child care". In fact, it says to the women of Canada: "Know your place".

Ms. Barbara Greene (Don Valley North): Mr. Speaker, I was struck by the comments of the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby with regard to poverty and food banks because that is, of course, a particular interest of mine. Having spent two years struggling with this problem on the subcommittee on poverty, one of the issues we need to resolve as a country is the issue of the responsibilities of the provinces versus the federal government.

We recommended that there be national standards for welfare in this country and we also recommended an expanded program of subsidized day care which I believe the member fully supports.

I know that the minister is in a very difficult position because imposing standards on certain provinces is, first of all, something they are absolutely opposed to. Second, it could be extremely contentious given the current constitutional agreement.

Right now the provinces have full authority to implement food programs under the Canada Assistance Plan for poor children, either on an area basis where they