

Government Orders

even have jobs live below the poverty line. It is a fairly large percentage of those people.

A lot of people think that people on welfare are single men too lazy to work. Unfortunately and fortunately at the same time, if we look at the people who are actually dependent on welfare cheques, 41 per cent of them are children, 17 per cent of them are disabled and 16 per cent are single parents.

Because of time constraints I am not going to go over the recommendations in other reports such as the Canadian Teachers Federation, the Standing Committee on Social Welfare and the Social Planning Council of Ottawa—Carleton in its report *The Other Side of Fat City*.

I am going to make reference to two recommendations which were made by our caucus. One of them could deal very effectively now with child poverty as it relates to school boards. We recommend that the federal government immediately participate with provincial and territorial governments, school boards, and community volunteers to provide nutritionally balanced breakfasts, lunches, and snack programs in schools throughout Canada. The reason we suggest this is because empty stomachs have no ears.

We also recommend that the federal government start immediately to look into redesigning the tax system to make it more equitable, to help families cope with the added expenses of raising children and to simplify the federal child benefit system by the beginning or by the end of April 1992.

These are all recommendations which were made. It is my hope that the government will have a chance to look at all these reports and hopefully in the new year it will come up with a strategy whereby we can solve the question of child poverty once and for all.

Mr. Lyle Kristiansen (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to take part in the debate at this stage of the discussion in the report stage of Bill C-32, but some recent events in my constituency have prompted me to rise at this time to draw to the attention of the government and of Parliament the increasing numbers of people who are having to turn to welfare or social assistance as a result of what seems to be a breakdown in much of the UI system.

The relevance of course to this bill is that the government is attempting to do through legislation what can only be described as an act of Scrooge in the days before Christmas. It is attempting to transfer its debt load on to our provincial governments in areas having to do with social assistance and welfare and many other financial cost sharing programs that impact directly on single parent families, on the poor and disabled, on injured and sick workers, those who are lining up at the food banks and the working poor.

There is something happening right now. I would like to quote very briefly from a memo that I just received from my constituency staff. My assistant in Nelson, B.C. says:

“People are mad as hell. I hear of fears for staff safety at the Nelson UIC office. It is taking at least six or seven weeks for first cheques in the most simple circumstances. If anything goes wrong with your claim, you face welfare until it is resolved. It is bad and we see little sign of it getting any better despite reassurances from UIC management”.

This is just one additional way that at the same time as the federal government is cutting back on what should be its legitimate contributions toward caring for the unfortunate, the laid-off, the sick and the disabled in our society, the policies and management policies of this government are driving more people off work, off wages, on to UIC, off of UIC and on to the welfare system.

A few months ago the government moved to do that as well when it changed the eligibility for unemployment insurance to make it more difficult to qualify for unemployment insurance on the one hand and, at the same time, shortening the term of the benefit period during which workers could collect unemployment insurance.

This federal government has been attacking it from both ends at the same time as it has been cutting back on its contributions. It has driven people off of unemployment insurance and on to welfare. Through mismanagement in the UI system it is causing tremendous delays for people to be able to get their UIC cheques, even when they are qualified to get them. The provincial governments across the country are being stuck with the bill, at least those provinces that are affected by the cap on the Canada Assistance Plan.