

*Supply**[English]*

• (1800)

It is really one of the most successful programs that we have in place. It is certainly our intention to make sure the program continues to make as much progress as it has in the past. In my travels across the country, that is one of the programs that the kids have told me they appreciated the most.

Like my friend, I also have two kids, but at least they are in school for now. Thank God for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Comments are now terminated. Debate. The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of State for Finance.

Mr. Dave Worthy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs) and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, debating this bill is like arguing against motherhood. There is not a single person in the House—and I do not think there are too many people in Canada—who would not be happy to do something directly, not only for the working poor—which this bill addresses—but for any of the people in Canada who are in poverty today, in fact anybody in the world who is in poverty.

A person has to consider what, in fact, is in the best interest of the working poor of Canada. Is it to continue the process of spending more than one has? Driving the national debt up? Borrowing from our children to pay for today? Or, is it in fact to establish an economic program that is sound and that will take us into the future where our children and our grandchildren can look at a country where they not only have a job but they see far reduced levels of poverty in the working poor, as well as in any other category, whether it is the seniors or the children.

Whenever a Conservative in particular stands up to address a topic like this, people immediately say: "Oh, he is a Conservative. He doesn't care about people." I would like to point just a brief example.

It is not just Canadians who think this way. There are other countries around this world which also recognize that you cannot give something out unless you have the money in pocket. To take another country in America, if you look at Mexico, it has far more people in poverty than we in Canada. If you want to call it working poor, most of those people are working and they are very poor.

What is in their best interests? Is their government's approach to try to solve that poverty without an improved economy? It has tried, but it does not work. We cannot improve the plight of the working poor without upgrading our economy. That is the task that this government has undertaken.

But, in every step of the way in trying to improve this economic condition in Canada, we have been opposed. At first I thought it was just politics, but I have come to realize that many people in the opposition actually believe in what they are saying and what they are doing. They do not believe that you need to have a sound economy before you can spend the money—

Mr. Boudria: Yes, we do.

Mr. Worthy: —that if you want to spend more, no matter what the cause, that it is okay, that somehow or other that debt does not really count.

I do not believe that, Mr. Speaker, and thank goodness a number of people in Canada do not believe that. Just as an example, the economic program that this government has established is a sound one. We believe that if you want a bigger piece of pie, you have to get a bigger pie.

That is a simple analogy. You do not need to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out. If you want more pie, you have to have a bigger pie in total. Our policies are encouraging that. But what has happened? Just this fall we saw nearly a year's backlog of sound economic legislation being held up by our friends down the hall. The first was Bill C-21, the reform UI bill, very important to this country. If you want to upgrade the working poor, especially the ones who need to get from a low paying job to a better paying job, you need a program that is going to work on training and education. Part of that was in Bill C-21. That was one of the main reasons for it. It was a reform UI bill that would provide some of the help that the opposition is actually looking for.

We had Bill C-28, another tax reform, to try to get greater taxation from large corporations. That was held up. We have Bill C-69, the government expenditure restraint bill, again trying to put this economy on a sound footing. That also was held up.