

Government Orders

The free trade agreement will allow, they said, the maintenance and enhancement of social programs and regional development programs for Canada and for Canadians. The evidence is the following.

Deep spending cuts were inflicted on the following budgets: the unemployment insurance program, \$1.9 billion; regional development offices, a 25 per cent cut; child care, a promised \$5.4 billion program was dropped; transfers to the provinces for health care and post-secondary education were further deindexed, \$3 billion over five years; the clawback of old age pensions and family allowances began, a \$500 million tax increase annually; and VIA Rail was gutted, \$500 million over five years. It goes on.

The government, it said, in the free trade agreement will provide massive adjustment programs for Canadians who lose their jobs due to the free trade agreement. That was one of its corner-stones. Here is the evidence. Despite the de Grandpré Commission report which called for the government to commit another \$200 million to training through the UI program, an additional \$300 million to the skills shortage training program, and a special \$3 billion retraining tax on business to fund job training, the Government of Canada cut its UI contribution by \$1.9 billion, cut unemployment benefits for the unemployed, raised UI premiums for employees and employers, and no adjustment programs have been established to deal with the thousands of lay-offs occurring due to plant closures. That was the free trade agreement and that is the clear unequivocal evidence.

The Prime Minister, when it came to children in poverty, said the following in 1983 in his book. I think it should be on the record. The Prime Minister stated:

• (1640)

And then there is what I call the dimension of tenderness. It is that vital responsibility of government to demonstrate compassion for the needy and assistance for the disadvantaged, the equalization of opportunity for all, and elevated sense of social responsibility that must continue to find favour with every thoughtful Canadian. Of all the challenges of government, no cause is more noble, no obligation more sacred."

That was in 1983. We saw that statement again and again in subsequent throne speeches and in subsequent budgets of the Minister of Finance, but what of the evidence? The evidence is clear, unequivocal and accepted by all except members opposite. More than 1

million Canadian children live in poverty, up 120,000 since 1980, and over 60 per cent of children in single parent families are poor. The relative poverty rate of children in Canada is about 13.4 per cent. That is nearly twice as high as the 7.1 per cent rate in the United Kingdom and more than four times that in Sweden and west Germany.

Just the other day, there was an article in *The Toronto Star* about the poverty in the city of Montreal. It stated:

Statistics Canada calculates that one in four people on the Island of Montreal is living in poverty. In Metro Toronto, by comparison, the figures is about one in eight. The face of poverty is not hard to find. It's virtually impossible to walk downtown without being asked repeatedly for money from panhandlers.

It is a very reputable report, Mr. Speaker, and it goes on:

An estimated 15,000 people are homeless, 4,000 of whom sleep on the street each night while the rest find temporary shelter with friends or relatives.

Yes, we heard, we saw, and we listened to the commitment in terms of the Prime Minister and children on poverty. The evidence is clear. There is no national child care program.

What has it done with regard to old age security in terms of the clawback, the cutting of VIA Rail, and of course the unemployment rate which has ravished high in many regions of the country, including my own constituency.

Perhaps the most telling example of the hypocrisy and the lack of actions by the government opposite comes from a lady who wrote a book called *Women and Children Last*. I want to quote it for you, Mr. Speaker:

A social worker at the Izaak Walton Killam Children's Hospital has seen single mothers bringing their babies into the emergency room with diarrhea and vomiting. They tell the doctors who examine their babies they they have been feeding them diluted whole milk or Similac diluted at twice the normal amount. Their welfare cheques were insufficient to permit them to buy Similac, which is much more costly than milk, or to buy enough of it. A month's supply of Similac costs around \$60. These mothers are not aware that their efforts to stretch an inadequate income have led to their babies' illnesses. "They just blanch at the thought of having to give the proper amount of Similac because of the cost."

Is there any clear evidence that the foregoing words opposite mean absolutely nothing to millions of Canadians across the country when the evidence is before us all, documented and known by the agencies that service these people?