

put an end to that shameful situation in Canadian schools?

[*English*]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the key responsibility of the federal government is ensuring that an attack is made on child poverty in Canada and around the world. We have made significant progress during the tenure of this government to lift children out of poverty, to give their parents the resources that they need to ensure that all children in Canada are properly nourished.

It is a commitment that is ongoing. It is one where we have made significant progress, and it is one where we are determined to make progress in the future.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadian children cannot afford breakfast while this government is out to lunch.

I have a supplementary questions. Some 20 years ago, the Prime Minister's friend and mentor, Margaret Thatcher, as education minister cancelled the milk program for school children in England.

I ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare if the events at Westminster last week will encourage his government to repair the holes it has cut in Canada's social safety net and, for a change, bring in direct support for those children who are hungry.

• (1500)

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I have to give the hon. member credit for creativity, if not for her understanding of the Constitution. She may well understand education is a provincial responsibility as opposed to federal, but where the federal government does have a responsibility is in ensuring the welfare of Canadian citizens. We do that, first of all, with transfers to the provinces under the Canada Assistance Plan and, second, in ensuring that an attack is made nationally on the issue of poverty.

If the hon. member would consider the figures today with those when her party was last in office, she would find that poverty among all groups, and particularly among children, has declined significantly since the Liberals were thrown out of office.

Privilege

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I think everyone is relieved that Algoma Steel is back to work and hopefully 6,000 people will eventually get back to work. The callback threshold for steel workers to become eligible for UI has been designated as 1,870, more or less. I asked her chief policy adviser if 1,725 would be acceptable. He said: "Yes". I retorted: "1,625?" He said: "No."

I am asking the minister which number would she endorse: 1,200, 1,625, 1,750, or 1,870, or none of the above?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the question clearly is a frivolous one because what we do is determine every case on its merit and that is the part of what is in the legislation and what is in the regulation. It depends on the context of the situation. He knows that.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the hon. Joel Matheson, Attorney General of Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

BLOC QUEBECOIS—REQUEST FOR RESEARCH FUNDS

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I should like to draw your attention and that of hon. members to a question of privilege concerning services and resources which are available to members and which unfortunately are not fair at this time. You sent me a letter today—I take it upon myself to read it because it is so very short—in which you say: "Dear Colleague, be advised that the Board of Internal Economy has considered the note in which you propose that the board allocate funds to your group for research and for the leader's office. Having examined your request, the board members deemed it impossible to approve the allocation of funds for the time being. Sincerely yours—" and so on.