

*Government Orders*

unemployment insurance benefits. However, this government does not want rigid rules regarding eligibility to hurt those in need whose weekly incomes may be slightly more than \$390.

Accordingly, we have also proposed that all claimants with insurable earnings between \$390 and \$425 receive the same weekly benefit of \$234. All those with insurable earnings over \$425 will receive 55 per cent of their earnings as benefits. We estimate that this will improve benefits for 15 per cent of unemployment insurance claimants or about 250,000 Canadians and their families.

The economic restructuring of our country owing to the forces of globalization and technology is creating a society increasingly divided between those who have well paying, secure, skilled jobs and those who are doing part time, low paid temporary work without the benefit or hope of advancement.

The segment of our population that has been hardest hit by this trend is women, in particular women with children. Women's roles in our society have undergone enormous changes since the social security system was first established.

Thirty years ago Canadians believed that most women would get married, have children and stay home to take care of their families. That was in the days when one wage earner could easily feed and care for a family and still put money aside for a holiday. Times have certainly changed. Today it takes two wage earners for most families to keep their heads above the poverty line.

• (1340)

Women now represent 45 per cent of the Canadian workforce. Unfortunately most of these women work for low wages. On average a Canadian woman working full time today earns just 72 cents for every dollar earned by a man. Those statistics say it all.

In 1990 about 5.4 million working Canadians received a total income of less than \$10,000. Of these, 64 per cent were women. At the other end of this scale the picture is entirely different. In 1990, 3.3 million working Canadians received a total income of \$40,000 or more. Of these, only 22 per cent were women.

Most working women in Canada have children. Many of these women are single parents bearing full responsibility for their children. The result is one of the most unacceptable facts of life in Canada: We still have 1.5 million children living in poverty. This is an unacceptable situation for one of the wealthiest nations on earth.

Our proposal to provide greater unemployment insurance assistance to those with low incomes and dependants will have an immediate impact on those Canadians most in need: the women and children of this country who are having trouble making ends meet.

Providing greater unemployment insurance assistance to low income Canadians with dependants is a signal to all Canadians that this government believes in equity and fairness. We want to make sure that if we have fewer unemployment insurance dollars that those dollars we do have will go to the people whose need is greater.

The proposals set out in the 1994 budget to change the unemployment insurance program are important first steps but they are only interim measures.

The reform of social security programs is essential if we are to meet head on the challenges of the 1990s and beyond. We can no longer use an outdated system to solve modern problems. It just is not working. We have too many people without jobs, too many families under stress, too many young people who have given up hope and too many Canadians who have lost their confidence in the future.

We cannot achieve change unless we shed the policies of the past that simply are not doing the job that they are supposed to do. We cannot achieve change if we try to cut and paste programs, patching something here and adding something there. We cannot achieve change unless we are willing to lay the system bare, putting every component under scrutiny.

This government believes we have to start with a clean slate and create a new framework for our social safety net. That is why this government is undertaking the most significant and wide ranging review of our social security programs in Canada's history.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think it is understood that the member is dividing her time with a colleague. Nobody is standing on questions or comments.

**Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents and speak about Bill C-17, an act to implement the first Liberal budget in 10 years.

The budget shows we have a game plan and that we are going to stick to it. We are delivering on our commitments, funding every key initiative in the red book. With our top priorities of jobs and growth, we are offering a balanced approach with emphasis on economic renewal, deficit reduction and social reform.

As represented by Bill C-17 presented by my friend and colleague the Minister of Finance, we are renewing our commitment to economic justice for a fair and lasting prosperity that can put Canadians back to work.

We have all come through a vigorous election campaign. Everyone had their losses, but the pain of our defeats is far less than the pain of the people I have met.

• (1345)

We have learned it is important to take issues seriously but never to take ourselves too seriously. I am sure we share the same cause, the cause of the common man and the common