

Government Orders

Education is seen as the most important equalizer of life chances. I challenge the government to show us in this debate one indication that Bill C-20 contributes positively to the education system in our country, either at the post-secondary level or other at levels that require commitments to English as a second language and to other indicators.

It goes on to talk about the erosion of social policies which support Canadian families. Fighting inflation "with high interest rates is driving more people into unemployment and companies into bankruptcy. Unemployment is a major cause of child and family poverty in Canada. It hits families harder than inflation".

In other words, the strategy is focused on the wrong objectives. The strategy should not be focused on inflation. The strategy should be focused on full employment. Every group in the country agrees except this government which pursues the strategy which is so distinct from the needs and the desires of Canadians that it is totally rejected by every indicator known in the country.

Whether we want to talk about the easy indicator of polls or whether we want to talk about the more serious ones of people marching in the streets, no one wants to deal with this government any longer.

"The abandonment of a public policy commitment to full employment and adequate minimum wage protection has been accompanied in recent years with this concerted attack on social programs and more seriously on fundamental principles which have reflected the underlying social solidarity among Canadians for decades".

Take minimum wage. Right now federal jurisdiction has the lowest minimum wage in the country. In response to a question from this side of the House, the Minister of Labour responded several months ago that it was a concern, he was looking into it and he would be right back to us. Those people are working under the government's jurisdiction and the government thinks that \$5 an hour is a good sum of money. They are still waiting for word.

Probably another year will pass before we have an adequate minimum wage under federal jurisdiction because this government still wants to deny its responsibility for helping families. Forget about the people who for whatever reason are on welfare. Let us talk about people who are working. They are working for \$5 an hour and this government does not have one minute for them. It cannot find the wherewithal after several years of governing to recognize what it is to work 40 hours a week for \$200. It is not right to have a government say: "We are thinking about changing your wage, maybe we will move it up a dime or fifteen cents". Under what circumstances are Canadians to take government seriously concerning their welfare? Under no circumstances.

This report also points out the degree to which this government has shifted the burden of taxation to lower and middle income individuals and families. "In Canada, the overhaul effect of the tax system is regressive because of the shift from corporate to personal income taxes and the excessive use of consumption taxes which hit lower income families the hardest".

You can imagine that as more of an indictment of a government which talked tax reform when it came in, which has produced a series of budgets and at no time has it addressed the fundamental shift of tax burden to the middle income families. Then we heard there were rumblings from the Tories backbenchers. They want to have a tax cutback.

• (1630)

Welcome to the real world. Where were you when your ministers were forming the budgets for the last six years? Why did you not raise then that people were getting overtaxed? Now that we have a crisis and we have poor who need help, the very people we depend upon for their good will and their tax dollars are saying: "We are fed up". They are fed up because you guys blew it and the whole country is paying the price for it.

It is in this context that we came to deal with Bill C-20 in the finance committee. I must, before I leave the overview of the Canadian economy, just spend one more moment talking about the impact of present government legislation on the health care system in this country.