

Oral Questions

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, far from it. What we are finding as a result of competition in the telecommunications industry is that Canada, which has long had the best telecommunications industry anywhere in the world, continues to make great strides.

If the hon. member wanted he could go to his House leader's constituency and say that he is opposed to the proposals to create new jobs in that constituency as a result of deregulation. If he would like to do that I would certainly invite him to do so.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, the minister knows full well that for Canadians it is either job losses or increased consumer cost.

The incident of which he talks concerns United Telecommunications which I might add is 20 per cent owned by the American giant AT&T. It is easy money for United Telecom because it comes in and creams off the long-distance profits from this lucrative market.

Does the minister not recognize that our world-class telecommunications because of deregulation is beginning to unravel at the seams? Does he not see that this policy through deregulation has in fact exposed the jugular of the Canadian telecommunications industry to the American corporate knife?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, what I certainly am aware of is that the position of the NDP is to oppose competition. It opposes anything that will bring down rates, opposes anything that will encourage new technologies, opposes anything that will ensure that new services are provided for Canadians.

Evidently the NDP opposes the hundreds of new jobs which we created in the constituency of its House leader. We will make sure that those people are aware of that position.

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POVERTY

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, I direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Today a two-year old girl named Jennifer in Winnipeg looks up, grabs her mother's arm and asks: "Milk, please". The mother has none in the fridge, only water and watery orange-flavoured Tang. She cannot afford to buy a single two-litre carton of milk. Jennifer is only one of 72,000 struggling poor children in Manitoba.

Now that the United Nations has condemned Canada for its lack of action on poverty, what plan does this government have to give these children a future and hope?

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, all of us on this side of the House are very aware of the situation right across Canada and the number of people who perhaps are having difficult times and living in poverty.

It is quite interesting with regard to the UN report put out a couple of days ago. What has not been realized is that about three or four years ago this government realized that until we started targeting the resources that we had for those really in need, we were not going to resolve this.

What we did was we took the child benefit package of \$2.1 billion, we took Brighter Futures which the minister of health introduced which specifically allocates \$500 million to those children who are really in need. Indeed the Minister of Employment and Immigration has done two pilot projects to get those people, specifically single women back to work.

• (1440)

We recognize the problem and we are working toward solving it.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Madam Speaker, a supplementary to the same parliamentary secretary.

In the Edmonton area, and I am sure in Calgary the figures are similar, there are currently about 42,000 children living in poverty, area food banks served 9,164 people in February alone and about 44,000 residents are officially unemployed.

Will the parliamentary secretary tell us if she supports spending half a million scarce taxpayer dollars to outfit a DND aircraft to Tory luxury tastes?