

We talked about rebuilding the security system, offering employment, offering hope, creating a more productive economy through better use of human resources, their skills, their talents and their abilities. We also spoke about education reforms, about our young people and the way in which we would have to prepare our young for the future ahead of them.

This despair is felt; and this minister's commitment to a review of the system is exactly what we need to do. We want to ensure that our children are well trained and educated and we want jobs for ourselves and for our future.

We recognize the contribution of senior Canadians. They spent their lives working to make a better place to live. They contributed to the development and funding of social programs. They should be able to live in security and enjoy retirement. The Canada pension plan, old age security, and guaranteed income supplement are meant to contribute to their security. These programs are no longer working as they were meant to.

• (1750)

By the year 2020 it is predicted that 20 per cent of our population will be seniors. Maybe many hon. members will be in that category. If we do not work on these programs now there will be no support for those Canadians then.

There is really one course of action. That is to involve Canadians in a full review of the system, a review that includes unemployment insurance, social assistance, training, education, looking at our young people, looking at our children and families or single and lone parent families, and all those who are presently experiencing difficulty in the system.

We must involve all Canadians in this dialogue. We must involve as many Canadians as possible because these programs affect each and every one of us from the cradle to the grave. We each have an interest, a shared concern in the system, because we are all stakeholders. This is why we have embarked on this.

The hon. members of the Official Opposition would have us believe that what we are about to do is what the Tories did: slash, burn, and cut and somehow walk away from the realities of the lives of the people we are here to serve.

The Liberal Party founded most of today's social programs. These programs were designed for a different time but they were based on the same values which we hold dear today. They were based on the beliefs that each and every Canadian has a right to live with dignity, that each and every Canadian should be able to earn his or her own living. They were based on the knowledge that we do not all have equal opportunities in life and that we should work to ensure a certain standard of living for all. That includes unemployment insurance for those encountering diffi-

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culties in the workplace, social assistance for those facing poverty, and a pension plan for those in their senior years.

We want to protect those values. We want to ensure those values continue to exist in our social security system. We can only do so with a comprehensive review such as the minister has proposed.

I commend him for this ambitious plan and encourage all members of this House to work and to work steadfastly to ensure that we provide the environment and the kind of security that is needed in our country.

I extend my own support and pledge I will do everything in my capacity to ensure that the residents of Etobicoke—Lakeshore and all Canadians participate in this endeavour.

We have recommitted through the red book that this must be done to ensure that our commitment is met.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Since there are only three minutes left, I would ask the member for Bourassa to share them with the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on her election as an MP. She is from one of Canada's important minority groups, and since I too belong to one of them, I think that we should be able to work together for Canada's minorities.

The member mentioned unemployment. I believe that in Canada, minorities are particularly affected by unemployment and the economic crisis. I would like to hear her views on equal access programs such as job access and affirmative action for minorities. I hope the government will make more room for minorities in the federal public service where they are under-represented.

• (1755)

[*English*]

Ms. Augustine: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and for the opportunity to share some of his experiences that we have in common.

I do care about equity issues. I think we are on the road to equity. If we look around the Chamber we can see that there are opportunities for us to work in a fashion that would reflect the nature of Canadian society.

Canadian society is not just English and French, or people from Quebec and people from the rest of Canada. We are multicultural and multiracial. We must be in every place in society. We must aspire to be the best Canadians that we can be and every opportunity must be given to individuals. It is a waste of talent and ability when every individual is not given the opportunity to reach their full potential.