

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN**

## MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Mazankowski that Bill C-32, an act to amend the Canada Assistance Plan, be read the third time and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** At the suspension of the debate, the hon. member for Dartmouth had 11 minutes left.

**Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Mr. Speaker, before the break for Question Period I was trying to impress upon the House the true state of the nation with regard to what is happening because of this government's economic policies, as well as the downturn in the world economy, particularly with Bill C-32 which is the cap on CAP bill. Most Canadians who hold an interest in what we do here have at least read about this and perhaps have seen some of the debate on television.

The focus of my comments prior to the break for Question Period was simply this. With all we do in this place, with all of the tinkering and all of the niceties we exchange in debate, one of the things we have to be very clear about is the fact that in this country, which ostensibly should be the wealthiest nation on earth, we now have according to Statistics Canada over one million children living in poverty. The consequences of a child who lives in poverty are real and are negative.

I have three children and as everyone who has children knows, parents want nothing but the best and the finest for them. Even with the great incomes we in this House and people in the business community make, it seems we can never give enough to our children because we desire for them more than what we can have for ourselves. I think that is a fair comment.

The point I was trying to make is that this government, through its economic policies, has made a decision that children born in poverty are not worth rescuing. It has made a decision that the parents of those children who live in poverty somehow are to blame for the situation

they find themselves in, as if anybody in his or her right mind would want to live on \$800 a month.

Statistics Canada has told us what it means to be in poverty. It has said that on average a family of four making less than \$26,699 in 1990 were living in poverty. There are people out there with families of four who are making \$8,000, \$9,000 and \$10,000 a year. My God, they would think they had won the lottery if they could make \$24,000 or \$25,000 a year.

This government has made a strategic decision, that those people do not matter any more. It has come in with Bill C-32 and basically said that the poorest of the poor, those who suffer disproportionately because of mismanagement of the economy by governments primarily, have to bear more of a burden of responsibility for the state we find ourselves in than anybody else in this country.

Can you imagine? We are about the wealthiest country in the world. We spend billions of dollars on various programs, yet we have one million children living in poverty. They go to bed with hungry stomachs, go to school with hungry stomachs, go to recess with hungry stomachs, and go home at the end of the day with hungry stomachs.

I talked to educators. I went to schools in my riding, and depending on the part of the town more or maybe less of this will be found. They told me that after three weeks of having a class they can tell which kids are coming to school without any breakfast in their bellies. Kids who are hungry do not learn to their full potential because their brains do not work when there is not enough food.

• (1600)

It seems that we are fully willing to accept the consequences of cyclical poverty. It seems that we are fully willing to say, and pardon me for saying this, to hell with those children who were born in poverty. That is what we say in this place when we come in with a piece of legislation like Bill C-32 which is a cap on the CAP. We say that the poor will have to do with less because we have mismanaged. While we amend the tax act to give more to those who have, we have with a backhanded slap said to those who have been forced into poverty: "Tough luck, Charlie".

I normally do not read in this place, but I want to read from this statistic because it has bothered me a lot: "Boys on welfare are 1.4 times likely to do worse than other boys of their age group in school". This is startling. "Almost one-third of children in subsidized housing",