

Government Orders

The preamble to the legislation says that these are the concern of all Canadians. That is in the preamble of the Canada Assistance Plan, and yet this government presents a piece of legislation that says: "We are not concerned about all Canadians. We are going to single out Canadians in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and handle them differently". This is particularly galling at a time when at least 50 per cent of the children living in poverty are living in those three provinces, at a time when deindustrialization that is taking place in Ontario because of the mismanagement of the economy by the government is causing untold personal tragedies as well as economic tragedies.

• (1150)

There are other elements of the Canada Assistance Plan that I think are equally as important that I have not heard people discuss. I have been involved in public welfare administration for most of my adult life. When I first started out working in public welfare, prior to the introduction of the Canada Assistance Plan, we had all sorts of resident requirements for people applying for assistance, for children coming into care.

In British Columbia you had to determine whether the person was the responsibility of the province of British Columbia. You had to determine their last place of residence for one full year without drawing public assistance. If that was in Ontario, you billed back the province of Ontario.

All sorts of bureaucracies grew up tracing who was legally responsible for providing assistance to that person, not only by province but often by municipality. The Canada Assistance Plan came in and as part of that package, it said you will receive assistance where you are, the costs will be picked up by the federal government, 50 per cent, and we will get rid of this terrible bureaucracy that tries to treat Canadians not as Canadians but as residents of Ontario, Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

This government by this act is opening up the whole question: Should these provinces which are now limited to 5 per cent expansion sit there and determine that a person is really a resident of Saskatchewan. He has come to B.C. to look for work but we are now forced to pay 100 per cent of the assistance for this person. Maybe we had better repatriate him to Saskatchewan, which they used to do, or bill the government of Saskatchewan for its

share of the income assistance, or Nova Scotia or Newfoundland.

I do not think this government understands the path it has started down with this type of legislation. It destroys the whole concept that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian regardless of where they are and that they are entitled to services in every part of this country, regardless of where they lived in the past, and there will not be financial billing back and forth between the provinces based on individual cases.

It would be a shame if another one of our social safety nets was eroded such as the threat that is now going on to our health care system because of this government's unilateral cutbacks to transfer payments.

What is the effect of these transfer payments? In Ontario this year under the cap on CAP there is a loss of revenue of \$415 million. In 1991-92, it is \$1.2 billion. In British Columbia it was over \$40 million the first year. This year it is about \$160 million and over the five-year period of this bill it will be \$1.2 billion.

This government talks about the deficits being run up by some of the provincial governments, but these deficits are in large part simply the deficit that this government has transferred on to them.

This year in the province of British Columbia, the deficit of \$1.7 billion is made up 67 per cent by the loss of transfer payments for EPF and CAP to the provincial government or the loss of revenue of \$1.1 billion out of a total deficit of \$1.7 billion.

The government has not solved the budgetary crisis or the debt crisis. It has simply passed it on to the provinces. The provinces are having to try and provide the services in a particular context. What is that context? It is a context of a shattered economy, a context of dramatic growth in unemployment, a context where many people who are working are still entitled to public assistance because the wages have been driven down, where there are part-time jobs, minimum wage jobs on which you cannot support your family.

Ontario has suffered the worst because of this recession. Because of the free trade agreement, the GST and the high Canadian dollar, the industrial heartland of Ontario has been devastated. Don Richmond, the commissioner for the Metropolitan Toronto Commission, points out that we are about where we were in 1938-39 in the midst of the Depression.