

*The Address*

economy but have mortgaged the future of our children and grandchildren.

It is very sad and unacceptable to see two million Canadians depending on food banks during this past Christmas season as a direct result of a quarter of a century of political malaise.

In Manitoba a recent survey stated that 20 per cent of the school children go to school hungry. A United Nations children's fund report notes that Canada has one of the highest child poverty rates among the wealthy industrialized nations. In 1989 this House passed a resolution pledging to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000; in fact, more than 1.2 million Canadian children were living in poverty in 1991, a 30 per cent increase in two years in the number of people under 18 whose families can scarcely afford the essentials of life.

Given that 1991 and 1992 were recession years, it can be safely assumed that the rate is now even higher. Teachers see it. Police see it. The courts see it. We all see it, if we dare, the result of governments' economic mismanagement. Poverty that leaves our children disadvantaged, apathetic and often hopeless; poverty that brings Canadian families to turmoil. The cost to our country is beyond value.

While we in the Reform Party have been given a mandate by the electorate to streamline government spending and slash the deficit, an even more important impetus comes from the single most important future resource, our children. It is on behalf of these future generations that the Reform Party has accepted the task of changing some of the policies that have denied Canada the prosperity it deserves and has cast doubt on the promising futures that our children deserve.

• (1950)

Only through an influx of new attitudes can we build this new Canada for future generations. Imagine a fiscal reform initiative where public funds are regarded by governments as funds held in trust instead of assets that must be spent too often unwisely.

Simply put and speaking as a farmer, it does not seem right that a banker can tell farmers they will have to pay higher interest rates because their products are being sold for a bargain basement price, a price which they have no control over.

At the same time, because of the bank's bad investments in foreign countries for projects like Canary Wharf, they will again pay higher service charges and interest to cover the bank's financial mismanagement of the country's wealth. Where is the justice in this type of reasoning? How can our youth translate this type of logic into a promising future?

I heard the Prime Minister say the other day that MPs' salaries were still far below that of professional hockey players. Well hockey players are paid for their performance. How should we rate the performance of MPs over the last two decades? They

have stick-handled their way through the taxpayers' pocket-book resulting in taxes that are eating up half of their pay cheques. Any farmer or businessman who continually puts his or her operation into debt year after year for a quarter of a century would have long ago been bankrupt and not rewarded with a gold plated pension.

I have never gone to sow a field in spring from which I have not expected a bumper crop. As a new politician I also expect a bumper crop of positive changes in this 35th Parliament. If these changes do not happen in this Parliament there are 52 very capable Reform MPs determined to make those changes in the 36th Parliament from the other side of the House.

The Reform spirit was born at Beaver River, has spread into Ontario and will not be deterred until it reaches the east coast of Newfoundland. It is only through political, financial and judicial reform that there will be a future for this great nation of ours, a future that our children will be anxious to embrace.

[Translation]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for his concern for young people. In my party I am the critic for youth, and I would say that the problem is the large number, more than two million, of young people living in poverty. I think it is extremely important not to forget this fact.

However, a little further in his speech he says that the way to improve the situation is to lower taxes. He does not even mention any program that could help people, especially young people, get out of poverty. Could he comment on that?

[English]

**Mr. Hoepfner:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member sure has my feelings along the line of child poverty.

During my years of farming I saw hundreds or thousands of farmers go bankrupt because of interest rates as high as 24 per cent. Today, these farmers are either taking away jobs from people who are living in the cities or supplementing their farm income if they have been able to hang on to their land. When one reads the statistics that over 50 per cent of net farm income today is received from off farm jobs, we can see why there is such a problem of destitution among young families, small and large.

• (1955)

I think it is very important that we correct this situation or there will be no future for this country even if we do clear up the deficit or whatever we do.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member for Lisgar—Marquette if he and his party, the Reform Party, have reviewed the throne speech to see how much of it was ongoing items and initiatives that had been recommended or adopted by the previous government?