what remains of our social programs and what remains of our public service over the long run.

Reform promised the opposite of the Liberals in the last campaign. We promised a smaller government. We promised spending cutbacks. Ironically, the cutbacks that the public service has experienced since the Liberals took power are already and will be in the long run far, far more than what the Reform Party promised under our zero in three plan of the last election.

If Reform had been elected government, the public service cutbacks would have been accomplished a year ago. We would be within one year of balancing our budget. All the worse would be behind us. Interest rates would be lower. Our economy would be growing by leaps and bounds. We would be in a good position to keep our most valuable social programs and the core of our civil service permanently intact. Because of Liberal inaction and because it took 18 months to get the first serious budget on to the table, all public servants will continue to suffer year after year. The government will continue to whittle away at the public service until it is reduced to a shell and no negotiated settlements, no agreements, no three–year suspensions, no promises will mean anything when that happens.

● (1335)

The government has set itself up for another promise. It has only suspended the workforce adjustment directive for three years. Conveniently, this is just beyond the next election. We know what kind of a carrot the government will dangle in front of public servants at that time, don't we?

The government will be expansive. It will be benevolent. During the next election campaign, if the economy is still doing well, it will play to the public service vote. It will promise that the freeze is almost over and the workforce adjustment directive will return. Trust us again, government members will say. However, if the economy is doing poorly the government will play to the taxpayer. It will say that it had to suspend the workforce adjustment directive.

No matter what is done, the government plays to the audience of the day. It is enough to make one a permanent political cynic watching the government flip–flop on its promises.

Public servants will remember the President of the Treasury Board when they are declared surplus under the authority of the bill. They will remember the minister for renewal in the public service and his boastful words during the election campaign. He said: "Public servants, enough is enough. I pledge to protect public servants against job loss". That is a good promise. However, 45,000 jobs later it is a pretty empty promise. He knew it at the time. Yet government members continued to make the promise during the election campaign, knowing full well that when they were on the government side of the House they would not be kept.

I will address another subject, term employees. The incentives, job offers, notice periods and other things which are offered under this bill do not apply to term employees, as opposed to indeterminate or permanent employees. Term employees have no status whatsoever under the workforce adjustment directive. Some of them have worked in government for years, but they have no status.

The 45,000 positions spoken of in the budget are all indeterminate positions. That could mean, for example, that the 24,000 term employees could be laid off at any time, in addition to the 45,000, with absolutely no incentive programs, no retirement packages, no appeal, nothing. I call on the government to treat term employees with fairness and not to lay them off in order to be able to afford more handsome payoffs for some of their own friends in the system.

My concern is with clause 3 of the bill. It lays out a plan for public servants. It empowers the cabinet to offer an early departure incentive and then it gives public servants a choice. They will have 60 days to choose whether to take the offer and go, or to refuse the offer, sit tight and hope for another job. They will remain on staff for a period of six months and then move on to unpaid surplus status for an additional 18 months. If there is no job offer after 18 months, they can be laid off.

The minister's officials have already admitted that a lot of jobs are going to be declared surplus. There will not necessarily be work for the surplus public servant to do when his or her job disappears. Yet under the bill the surplus worker will receive six months' pay regardless, in some cases for doing nothing at all.

All members of the House will remember that the President of the Treasury Board promised just a few weeks ago that no employee would be paid if he or she was not working. This was a fundamental, unbreakable, unshakeable promise on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board; that no one would be paid if there was no work to be done. Yet like so many other promises, this one too has been laid aside by this bill.

I would like to move on to clause 9 of the bill which mandates a change to the Financial Administration Act. Section 7 deals with the delegation of authority. I have real accountability concerns on this one because it says that Treasury Board may authorize any person who is part of the public service of Canada to perform functions or powers that it is able to delegate. That clause reads differently in the Financial Administration Act. The way it currently reads is actually safer, it is more restrictive. It says that anyone authorized under the Treasury Board may under the current regulations "authorize one or more persons under his jurisdiction to exercise or perform any such power or function".