

Government Orders

refugees coming into our country or any other poor within our society. What would the member suggest? How would the member suggest we help the poor in this country when we lose the financial and economic ability to do so?

• (1910)

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, the way we are going to help the poor in this country is with what has been said for the last three weeks over and over again. We are going to help the poor by getting them back to work in this country, by giving them jobs, by creating jobs, by creating an environment in which the small business sector can create jobs.

That is how one gives them dignity. That is how one is able to afford it. The red book has outlined a policy through 122 pages. It details very clearly how we are going to renew the economy in this country, how we are going to put people back to work and how the poor will take care of themselves when they have those jobs.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I consider it a privilege to debate the reform of social programs in the country. For many here today, reforming them to ensure both their sustainability and their availability to those who need them is a significant reason to have run for Parliament in 1993.

We feel grateful that the government has given all members a chance to air their views on this issue before legislation is introduced. I am sure that all members share my desire that backbenchers and constructive opposition members alike will be able to see reflections of these debates in the legislative program to come.

Certainly there is general agreement in this country on the need for reform of our social programs. Members on both sides of the House again agree that cosmetic changes are not enough.

Questions are being asked that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. Is there a better way to deliver this program or service? Do we need it at all? Are there built-in disincentives to people who need to be fully self-supporting? How much do programs cost? Can we sustain them?

Watching the finance minister's pre-budget consultation in Calgary on the weekend, I was struck by widespread agreement on these issues. Almost everyone said that our current method of funding social programs is killing jobs and export opportunities, that less government intervention is better and that government needs to spend less, spend smarter and tax less.

Spending less does not mean taking Canada back into the dark ages. What it really means is that funding must be refocused and it is incumbent on this House to lay down the principles that will

guide a rechanneling of program assistance in a way that is fair, effective and compassionate.

Other speakers have already discussed a number of principles. One of them is that spending in the future must be based on need rather than entitlement. People with high incomes do not need the same kind of help as those with low incomes. Therefore the fact that they belong to a particular ethnic or demographic group should not automatically entitle them to extra government support.

We feel that tomorrow's programs will be delivered more in concert with private groups. People in need will work with a community based network rather than those who are simply paid to supply them a service. These private groups may be part of the answer in helping an individual emerge from this chronic position of need.

There should be also a stated objective of other programs that recipients be required to undertake training or community service that will enable these people to acquire the skills that will reduce their future dependence upon governments.

These principles are significant. I have the privilege of addressing the most important principle this afternoon and this evening. That is the position of the family in relation to the state. This principle is important because it questions the assumption of the welfare state that has become entrenched in the post-war era, the assumption that has spurred this magnificent fiscal situation in which we find ourselves today.

I am speaking of the concept of the paternalistic state, the notion that the state or the government has the capacity or even the duty to somehow replace the family as the basic unit of nurture in our society.

This sentiment, while never accepted by most Canadians, was heralded when Bonnie Kreps announced to *Maclean's* magazine in 1969 that her group's objectives included getting rid of the conjugal family unit. For decades this idea has occasionally found its way on to the desks of government policy makers. Many feel today that families have been unappreciated and under supported as a result.

While the role of the family has been questioned, the concept of the state is also changing.

• (1915)

People are disillusioned. They no longer believe it is possible for government to provide all of the solutions. Certainly its scope is shrinking because of its financial problems. In a way this could be a positive thing because with a little help human relationships could fill in the gaps left by government programs.

The basic unit of care should not be a government cheque or the department of something or other or a social worker. The