

Government Orders

In the few moments remaining, let me move from the general to the more specific. Ultimately our ability to generate wealth is a function of our knowledge. We live in a knowledge based economy. The degree to which wealth is shared in this country is a function of our moral commitment to take care of each other and that means, in this day and age, ensuring that every Canadian has access to meaningful education and meaningful training so as to gain the knowledge to become a contributing member of society through a job.

More specifically our review of UI needs to review the training programs included therein. Too many of our training programs are merely effective band-aids that do not offer long-term realistic hope. The national training act needs to be revamped. Provinces need to participate in an honest dialogue so that the bogus distinction between education and training disappears.

Let me close by asking all members of the House to respectfully set aside their ideological differences and work together to meet demands for a fairer Canada and a more just Canada and end the scourge of poverty on our land.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to enter into this debate.

First of all I would like to congratulate the member for Elgin—Norfolk. I can sympathize with him in making his first speech in the humble assembly that is here. I can recall my first week in the Alberta legislature. I was asked to move the speech from the throne at the young age of 27. I remember a number of people in the government of that time who had been there for 27 years and had most likely heard 101 different speeches and I had to say something different to them. I remember that being a very humbling experience. I am sure the member felt that way today but respects this institution very much.

• (1630)

I would caution the hon. member that one of the diseases that often sets in after you have had the opportunity of being in this assembly is that the 10 minute speech early in your career seems to enlarge and enlarge until it becomes the 40-minute speech. So be careful of that disease as you go forward in your career. I wish you all the best and congratulations on your first speech in this assembly. Very well done.

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. member will always want to speak through the Chair.

I am a little bit puzzled. Is the hon. member responding to the speech or is he making his speech now?

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): Perhaps I could start my own speech if it is appropriate or if Mr. Speaker permits I could ask a question of the hon. member.

The Speaker: I was sort of looking forward to that expansion of the speech that took 27 years. If he has a short question I would like the hon. member to have a chance to answer.

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): I wish to ask the hon. member how he sees the study that is going to take place with regard to human resource development. Does the hon. member see the targeting of programs for those who are need or does he see it in terms of the philosophy of the government approaching the responsibility of human resource development, social services and other related programs on a broader budget basis?

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the questioner for those kind comments. I have no difficulty with the concept of targeting those most in need. It is fundamental to what we need to do as a country.

Over the last five years our expenditures on unemployment insurance have grown from approximately \$11 billion to \$20 billion. In large part that is due to the problems in the economy and the major downturn or economic depression we have been through.

Given that we spend so much money in this country we need to always for the sake of the poor and for the sake of those most in need make sure that money is always well spent.

We need to look specifically at training programs that quite often do not do the job. When our programs do not do the job as they are supposed to, it is the disadvantaged people that are most hurt, I have no problems with targeting those most in need.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): I appreciate very much the courtesy to me and the hon. member as well, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to indicate I appreciate very much that the government has allowed us as members to have input into the reforms of the social security system and to make comments.

The minister has requested that all Canadians throw off the old ideas, put aside vested interests and give some new impetus and some new objective to our social security programs. That is a very honourable objective of the minister.

Many other ministers and many other governments in the past have also set the very same objectives. It seems to be a pattern. When a new government comes to a legislative assembly or the House of Commons the first thing it wants to do is review what has happened and start anew. I certainly hope when we do this review, we maintain some of the good programs and some of the assistance, the safety nets that have worked well across this nation.