

Nor was the existing collection of selected transfers designed with considerations of efficiency in mind. On the one hand most social welfare programs incorporate few incentives to work. On the other hand they deny income support to one group in society particularly deserving of help but largely overlooked by the present system: the working poor.

• (1945)

Increasingly, Canada is funnelling scarce resources into a social security system which is not just obsolescent, but to a degree unsustainable. The point here is that we need to restructure fundamentally the way in which social services are delivered, possibly along the lines of a negative income tax.

The government's economic fiscal and monetary policies of the past years have left Canada in a situation that is increasingly difficult. With interest rates higher than economic growth rates and the Canadian economy recovering, even while overseas economies remain in a slump, it seems unlikely that the normal growth rates and cycles in the economy will solve this problem.

The challenge will be there for the next Government of Canada.

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his address this evening. Tonight's ultimate votes go to the centre of parliamentary democracy. This is when we vote on supply for the government.

I have been doing a little study of the supply that was granted by Parliament over the votes of the opposition in a previous fiscal year. In fact I recently received some information by way of the Order Paper which I would like to give to my colleague. He may have some comment on it.

In April 1992 I asked what the cost was of the public opinion polls that had been commissioned by the government opposite for the year 1991-92 and what the purpose was of those polls. The government spent over \$5 million on frivolous public opinion polling.

Supply

I would just like my colleague to be aware of what some of the ridiculous expenditures were from a government that goes around the country spewing forth propaganda about fiscal responsibility and how it wants to take care of the taxpayers' money.

The government spent, for example, \$140,000 evaluating a special income assistance program by way of public opinion poll through Agriculture Canada. It spent \$200,000 checking out the attitudes and perceptions of farmers concerning federal agricultural policies and issues facing the industry by way of public opinion poll.

It conducted a poll to find out whether or not people in Atlantic Canada know about the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. It had money for that in these tough, tough times.

Let us see what else we have in here. Immigration Canada spent \$452,427 trying to find out what Canadians thought about various immigration issues.

I suggest to the government that it might want to consider having the odd election more frequently. It would soon find out what Canadians thought about it and its policies.

Out of Energy, Mines and Resources the government spent \$15,000. What for? To test new R-2000 logos. That is just a little bit below the minimum wage for a year for some people living in Canada.

This is the kind of thing this government, which is seeking our support for its spending estimates, has found time to do. I have only gone through a few pages of a very long report.

I know there are other questions and comments so I would like to give my colleague from Etobicoke North the opportunity to comment on the fiscal prudence of public opinion polling on an enormous scale by the government opposite.

Mr. MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member draws our attention to a significant problem in the way in which this government has engaged in profligate spending during its eight or nine years in office. The example he has cited is only one of many that could be pointed to with regard to the excessive use by government of outside consultants, and in this case public opinion pollsters.