

Government Orders

their dignity, to retrain if necessary, to give the type of support so they become a taxpayer instead of a tax taker.

I am intrigued, and have been for years, with a proposal that has been put forward by my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood. He has put a lot of thought into it. I have polled my constituents on it over the last number of years. It is called a single tax system. It seeks to address the real problems in this country. The problem is not just expenditure, it is also revenue generation. Unless we address both problems in tandem we still have a big problem.

To say we have economic problems because too many people are ripping the system off through social programs is wrong. I have addressed that. However, to turn a blind eye to the fact that we now have a growing underground economy and a tax system that simply does not work because it does not generate enough revenue, in a way that it is not a disincentive to industrial development and wealth creation, is wrong as well.

• (1215)

In the proposal put forward by my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood we looked at a number of ways to have a single layer of delivery so that those who need assistance the most get the most assistance with a properly thought out program to raise them up and reintegrate them into the workforce and allow them become productive.

I have never met an individual who wanted to be on welfare. I have never met an individual who wanted to be poor. I have never met an individual who wanted to feel they could not give their children the basics of life. I simply have not met them and I have met a lot of people in my life.

This is an ideal opportunity for us to be bold, to go back to the principles that have made this country great, but also to allow in this debate a broader application of how we deliver our programs. I firmly believe that the proposal put forward by my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood on the single tax has some merits about how we can deliver on a single tier, how we can cut out layers and layers of government and bureaucracy so that the limited dollars that come from the same source called the taxpayer are focused and targeted to achieve the social and economic benefits on which I think all members of this House would agree.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dalphond—Guiral: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to ask for unanimous consent to sit through the lunch hour in order to listen to as many speakers as possible.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the suggestion that we sit through the lunch period. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on his election. I also would like to congratulate the people of his riding for electing him. He made a speech this morning which is very pertinent.

[*Translation*]

This speech is quite consistent with the expectations of my party, the Bloc Québécois. He gave us his point of view very eloquently, and I would like to ask him a question. Does he agree that the reform we are about to undertake should not affect disadvantaged people in our society?

[*English*]

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his complimentary comments.

I fundamentally believe that. We have to be very careful in this country.

The poor and the disenfranchised, and that includes regions not just individuals, are all too often easiest hit when it comes time for government to redirect finances or to cut program expenditures.

I always believed in opposition and I will continue to believe it in government that the role of individual members of Parliament is to speak up for those that lack a voice.

When necessary cuts come forward the debate will continue I hope about who bears which part of the burden of those cuts. We can speak here for decades about who caused what to happen. The reality is that our present circumstances must be addressed.

I believe that any cuts in budgets, any reworking of the social safety net must first and foremost look after the needs of the most disadvantaged in society but also the disadvantaged provinces like Nova Scotia and Quebec that have to rely on equalization payments from the federal government unfortunately.

We all want to contribute. We do not want policies from any level of government that stop our individual citizens and our provinces from developing to the fullness of their potential. That really is the challenge of government after all.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the comments of the hon. member for Dartmouth. I think we have a socialist in Liberal clothing over there. He talks about his belief in the state's responsibility to redistribute wealth. Those are the policies of my friends and colleagues who sit behind me as independents because their party was annihilated during the last election.

He talks about the redistribution of wealth and the social programs of which the Liberal Party is so proud. Let us remember that these programs were introduced back in the Liberal era of Pierre Trudeau and the just society, at which time he borrowed money and put this country in the position we are in today