

Supply

to the Scarborough van plant but certainly to many others as well.

I agree that we should be working with the employers involved to see if it is possible to put together some plan to save plants when they are in jeopardy. The hon. member will know that was done with de Havilland which was in exactly the same position. There were about 5,000 direct jobs involved at de Havilland and another 5,000 to 10,000 indirect jobs. The federal government and the Ontario government put together a plan which allowed de Havilland to survive and continue.

I hope the same kind of effort can be put forward in as many instances as possible by all levels of government and all Canadians. I applaud the hon. member for his suggestions. I watched him in the debate yesterday. He put forward some ideas on this and I think they are good ideas. That is what we need in this country. Rather than standing in this House battling each other on a partisan basis, I think we need to get our heads together and try to do something about the problems of this country.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, before I get into my main remarks I take it by the member's answer that he supports the view that a \$200 million investment in a retrofitted plant that would continue to make money for General Motors and also keep all those people working is a much better investment than spending \$700 million on UI and welfare.

This government will go down in the next election because in the name of deficit and debt reduction it has ground things to a halt. When we look over the books and records in the last nine years we see that between unemployment insurance and welfare charges we have disbursed Canadian taxpayers' money to the tune of about \$165 billion.

There has been tremendous cost to the treasury. Almost 35 to 40 per cent of the total debt of the country was disbursed in the last nine years on UI and welfare. We have very little to show for that.

I know there is a global recession but I would much rather face taxpayers and say we spent \$160 billion of their money during this global recession but we have a modern plant in Scarborough; a modern auto plant in Brampton; new infrastructure in terms of sewers and

roads; or we have done things with the environment to protect our most precious resource of all, our water.

I think that in the long run Canadians would much rather have an asset at the end of the period, even though they might have some debt, than have all this debt and over three million people sitting out there frustrated and broken-hearted who do not really feel any sense of hope.

The thing that really disturbed me about the Minister of Finance's latest budget was the fact that this is the government's last budget and he had one last chance at comprehensive tax reform. You know, Mr. Speaker, I was naive to think that the minister, for whom I have an infinite amount of respect was really going to take it on.

• (1250)

I am referring specifically to the idea that I have been putting forward for the last three and a half years in this House. It is the notion of comprehensive tax reform with the idea of a single rate of tax on the corporate side and the personal side where we would just flush out all the loopholes and tax preferences.

The government talks about cutting this program and that program and cutting grants but the biggest area in government expenditures is that of tax expenditures. Most of these tax expenditures go to multinational corporations. There are about \$40 billion to \$50 billion worth of tax grants buried there and the government did very little to address that particular area of tax grants.

This is what the people of Canada are crying out for. They are crying out for fairness in the tax system. They are crying out for efficiency. They are crying out for simplicity as well.

Maybe the government does not want to address an idea that was put forward by a Liberal. I have heard many members on that side of the House and the NDP express interest in the notion of comprehensive tax reform and a single tax but maybe the government feels it cannot go near that idea because it came from the opposition party.

Last Friday night I watched a portion of the Conservative leadership debate. The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, one of the leadership candidates, put forward the idea of comprehensive tax reform. He initiated this and said he supports the idea of a single tax