

The Address

• (1240)

Mention was made of a kitchenette and bathroom installed for the head of Investment Canada at a cost of \$125,000, according to what was said this morning. That is enormous. You may say that these are mere drops in the bucket as far as the overall budget goes. However, these are the kinds of expenses we have to tally and eliminate before—

[English]

The Speaker: Order. I see the member for Capilano—Howe Sound on his feet. I was waiting for the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry to conclude his remarks. I know the member will be left with a rather brief period of time to answer.

[Translation]

If the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry could finish up quickly, the hon. member for Capilano—Howe Sound could then respond. Are you nearly finished?

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): I want to give the hon. member time to respond, if he wishes, so that will be all, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Mr. Grubel: Mr. Speaker, I deplore the idea that we discuss this important issue on how to save Canada from bankruptcy by hammering away at non-existent facts.

On the matter of our deficit the fact is that 60 per cent of all our spending is going to transfers to persons. We have to do something about it. This is where the money is. We cannot save this country with line by line spending examinations and cutting out the sorts of things the hon. member is talking about. Even if we abandoned all the government we could not get our house in order.

Sooner or later, and I believe as quickly as possible, we will have to get at the core of the cause of our financial problems: overspending through the mechanism of transfers to individuals, so-called social programs. Contrary to what the member has said I have identified that we must not attack benefits for the poor. It is because the Reform and I are concerned about maintaining benefits for the poor that I believe we must look at the shortcomings in our current system that I have identified.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, in entering the debate today I would like to seek the permission of the House to be allowed to conclude in 20 minutes even if it oversteps the one o'clock limit.

The Speaker: The House has heard the member's request. Is there unanimous consent not to see the clock at one o'clock?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, this debate is about Canada, its economy and its future. As has been noted from the speeches given yesterday the Liberal view of the economic condition is quite clear. We need to create jobs and to put Canadians in the position to spend and to pay taxes to get the economy going. We need to stop the downward spiral of cuts.

I submit that lack of revenue is the problem. It is not a problem of spending as has been outlined in several interventions so far by representatives of the Reform Party. By contrast, I heard yesterday the leader of the Reform Party recommend to reduce here, to stop spending there: reduce and stop, reduce and stop, cut here, cut there, cut everywhere and inevitably create further unemployment, stagnate the economy and, as an added technique proposed yesterday by the member for Calgary South, put a cap here and there and as long as those who are employed are doing all right everybody else will be fine.

• (1245)

Yesterday the leader of the Reform Party, the member for Calgary South, trotted out an old idea advanced some years ago by two American senators, Gramm and Rudman. He urged spending caps as his remedy for economic ills. Then, to give his imported policy a Canadian touch, he produced another old chestnut. He urged the elimination of old age pensions for Canadians who make more than a certain sum, thus advocating something we reject on this side of the House, two classes of citizens; thus introducing means tests; and thus weakening the cohesion of our social fabric.

I submit that the idea of eliminating old age pensions is actually not new in the ranks of the Reform Party. We will recall that during the election in early October, as reported in one of our national newspapers, a Reform Party candidate in British Columbia was quoted as saying that old age pensions were a form of welfare. That is what he said and that is what must be remembered. It is the agenda of the Reform Party. It is on record. Let us not be deluded today or enchanted by statements made on the part of its representatives as to what was in its program and in its campaign statements.

We cannot accuse the Reform Party of not being consistent. The member for Calgary South is well known for his admiration of the American health system which also divides society into the haves and the have nots: those who have access to social programs and those who do not. There is consistency there no doubt.

Let us go back to the economy. One is forced to conclude that the Reform vision of the economic ills of Canada and their remedies is a rather constipated vision. It badly needs to be put in touch with reality. I invite the leader of the Reform Party to enter, if not the 21st, at least the 20th century. I invite him to