

Government Orders

Party, might say the principles are no longer valid. I would disagree with them strongly. What may no longer be valid are the delivery mechanisms that have been put in place. They may not be delivering the programs as efficiently as we might like. In fact, to argue that the vehicles must be maintained may jeopardize the principles and the programs.

This is not just a Liberal philosophy. It is, I believe, a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society. It is part of the fabric of this country. Who better to redesign the social safety network than the party that put it together in the first place, the Liberal Party. Who better at this point in our history to reach out and start it here than this new Liberal government.

We have sought input and debate from all sides of the House. However there are certain things we have to remember in the debate. It is very easy if we are just looking at the fiscal concerns of the state. It is very easy to get rid of the deficit. I listened to my Reform colleagues opposite during the campaign and they presented through their leader and their candidates a way to get rid of the deficit in three years. I could get rid of the deficit in 12 months, but it would be a vastly different Canada.

It would mean that the poor and the disenfranchised would be living in parks like they do in the United States. I am sorry but that is not the type of Canada I was born in and that is not the type of Canada I am going to work toward. It means that transfers to the poorest provinces would be cut, such as to Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan. We can say: "Well, we have done our bit as federal legislators. We have done our bit to reduce the deficit". However, the human carnage that would remain after those actions would be unconscionable and unacceptable. So we are not going to follow the Reform pattern of slash and burn on social programs.

As a government we want to have a full debate about what principles of social justice we believe are still applicable and whether we can develop the vehicles to deliver that social justice through programming.

● (1210)

We have to remember a number of things. One is that even in the wealthiest country in the world, and the country that the UN says is the best country in the world to live in, in spite of the multi-layered social programs that we have across Canada, we have over 1.5 million children who live in poverty. Obviously the programs and the goals we set out through our program structure has not hit the mark. The country has changed. Things have changed forever. We can no longer protect certain industries. We are into the globalization of trade.

We have to get back to the basics. If we still believe in the principles that I talked about at the beginning of my address, that of collective ownership of the resource and of social

responsibility, then we will start from that basis and rebuild a social services delivery system, one that will have excised from it the abuses, or as much as one can excise from it, and one that ensures at all times we look at the dignity of the individual.

I cannot think of anything more undignified than somebody who has to live on welfare. I cannot think of anything as undignified as a man or a woman who has to go to bed knowing there is no food for their children to eat the next morning before they send them off to school. I do not think that is what we want as Canadians no matter what our political beliefs may be.

It is time to sit down and re-establish those fundamental principles. Maybe we will find they are not going to be vastly different from the principles that were laid down by this party after the Kingston conference in the Pearson era. We will probably find the fundamental principles of liberalism are still a basis on which to build. We will invite people from across this country, of various political beliefs, to help ensure that the systems brought forward deliver the type of assistance to those who need it the most in a way that is not a hand out but is a hand up.

Single parents in our ridings are coming in and saying: "Look, I am receiving \$828 a month on welfare and I don't feel good about it. I feel kind of soiled. I want to contribute. I don't want to be a burden on society. But the circumstance I find myself in right now is one that I have had to go to a social service department". They then tell us that they want to work but the only job they can find pays \$6 an hour. If they work for \$6 an hour and have to pay child care costs out of it then effectively they have lost \$200 to \$300 of an \$850 income. Those are the realities of the circumstances that are out there today and they have to be addressed. I believe we can do this together collectively.

It is important, however, to remember a couple of things. We have created a multi-layered bureaucracy to deliver the dollar. By the time I go to one member and take a dollar out of his or her pocket, run it through the system and then drop it back down to the individual, the individual who needs the hand-up not the hand-out, there is not enough money to do anything but keep them on welfare and stuck in the cycle of poverty.

Somebody somewhere has to be paid to take the money, to process the money, to drop it down to a program directorate, down to the province and down to the municipality. We have three levels of government taking that \$1 and leaving as much as possible intact to deliver some assistance to somebody who needs at that moment. We have to look at that. We have to take a very strong lead, in my view, in trying to ensure that the dollars are not spent administering the program but the dollars are spent on a well thought out program that will allow people to maintain