

Government Orders

providing the CBC with additional funding. Rather than coming through the front door as a subsidy or a grant from government it is another way it can access funds outside of the purview of the House of Commons. That is not correct.

On a more fundamental basis, Reform feels it is time to re-examine the purpose and the mandate of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. First, in this new age of satellite dishes and information highways, of cable TV and pay per view, is it realistic to expect the CBC to retain a sizeable viewing audience? By the CBC's own admission this audience has already declined to just 13.3 per cent of viewing share. It has diminished significantly.

Second, is it fair to allow the CBC to straddle the line between market player and crown corporation? While some have called on the CBC to act like any other private sector business, this is not possible. In the private sector you have to earn a profit or you die.

• (1155)

The CBC does not have to confront this discipline of the marketplace. It does not matter if it loses staggering sums of money. At the present time as Canadians we are subsidizing it. Many Canadians do not realize that \$1.1 billion is going directly out of the public purse to subsidize the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. That is the way it is. The government has always been there to bail it out when necessary.

We are in a period of time when this is a legitimate question. How can a private network like CTV be expected to compete against a company which has billions of dollars of government money behind it? This question must be addressed.

Communication and technology are so different today than ever before. People who did not have access to television or radio at one time in our history today have that access. Anywhere in the world you can project television, anywhere in the world you can project radio or communication systems. We do not require a subsidized organization to meet that communication demand that was there at one time.

I recall my stint at the University of Alberta where one of my colleagues, the Right Hon. Joe Clark, and other colleagues I spent time with debated this issue. At that time I supported the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on the basis that there were places in Canada unable to receive this communication of television or radio and we needed the corporation for that purpose. I supported it at that time. That reason is gone today. We have to look at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation running on its own two feet on a non-subsidized basis from the Government of Canada.

The last item I would like to deal with is the unemployment insurance question which has been discussed in this assembly. The Reform Party supports the direction the Liberal government

has taken in the principles it has embraced in the changes to the unemployment insurance plan.

First, Reform congratulates the Liberal government for reducing the unemployment insurance premium rates. It has long been the Reform Party's position that the most effective job creation tool available to government is to reduce the tax burden of individuals and of businesses.

Second, Reform fully supports changes designed to improve the link between work history and unemployment insurance benefits. These changes move the unemployment insurance plan back toward a true insurance program, as it was intended to be in the first place. As I will argue later, many of the other policy goals UI is currently serving would be better accomplished through other government programs.

Third, Reform supports changes to the qualifying period, the benefit rate and the benefit period, all of which reduce some of the program's disincentives to work. While we have some concern about changes making it easier to allow voluntary quits to collect benefits, the general direction of the changes is to encourage people to find employment, whether it is self-employment or employment with another individual or another business firm.

In another area, while Reform is glad to see the Liberals abandon the principle of universality by moving to a two tier benefit structure which targets those most in need, we believe that such means tested criteria are not suitable for an insurance program. Such goals should be met through other government programs.

While we in the Reform Party support these actions in and of themselves we are disappointed that they were not part of a comprehensive review program, the comprehensive social review program that is currently going on. We feel that as with the rest of Bill C-17, the changes proposed in the bill are indiscriminate, ad hoc measures taken with little or no consideration as to the impact these changes will have on the broader network of Canadian social programs.

• (1200)

The government seems to have forgotten that the income security system of our country is not a crazy quilt of piecemeal programs, all existing independent of the other. Rather it is an intricate series of interdependent programs consciously designed to complement and strengthen one another to meet a broad range of needs faced by Canadians in their daily lives.

In the last portion of my speech I will address the vision of the Reform Party of the unemployment insurance program and its proper place within the broader family of programs that constitute Canada's social safety net. It is instructive to look at the government's approach to UI reform, for it is representative of