

Government Orders

The other issue I would like to touch upon is a little closer to my heart. There is another fund that we look after in our social programs. We in the Reform Party, as do government members—they have said it often enough—care about the truly needy. We care about providing services, funding and facilities for those people who really and truly need it. The problem in our government today however is that we have not spent enough time and effort to establish where that line is, or the grey area where it is, so that we can start helping those people.

• (1130)

OAS is an unfunded program currently which nobody since 1971 has paid into. I would like the hon. member, based on his youthful experience, to say whether he believes that 25 years from now or 35 years from now, whenever he reaches the age of 65, he should receive \$386 per month as his reward for becoming 65. If he does not need it, should he receive that money? If his income is below a household average or a certain minimum income level, then I believe we all should get it should we be so unfortunate, the two of us, that when we are 65 we need that help.

These two questions are meant to be serious questions. I am not playing games here. These are two issues that play hard on my mind. I am grappling with them and I want to come up with some solutions.

Would this member tell me whether there will be money there for CPP, and does he feel an entitlement to his OAS payments when he reaches 65?

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, of course the hon. member is raising a very pertinent question on the state of finances in Canada. We know we have a high deficit. We are facing problems, but we are also facing challenges.

One has to keep in mind that the whole idea of the projet de loi is to try to find solutions, to bring Canadians back into the workforce, putting them back to work. Much has to be done in terms of training and retraining. Much has to be done in terms of trying to free up capital for small businesses.

Just the other day there was a report that was brought to the attention of hon. members as a result of which we are going to be asking banks to put up some money to try to encourage small businesses and free enterprise and to go on to try to create jobs throughout Canada. Much can be done with small employers.

Of course the Canada today is not that of the year of my birth, 1962. Things have changed. Things will keep on changing. However, as long as we look into other venues in trying to encourage investment, foreign investment, trying to free up capital for small companies and corporations, I am sure that we will surmount these obstacles and that there will be money available for all Canadians in the years to come.

Mr. Silye: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I had overestimated the member's age. Now that I know his age I would like to ask him again whether he feels there will be sufficient moneys in CPP. The CPP question he did answer. He feels there will be. On the OAS, the second question I asked, does he feel an entitlement to receive whatever the monthly payment may be in the future just because he reaches age 65 should he be above the minimum wage?

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I am a Liberal and as a Canadian as well I should add that I believe in the concept of universality in different programs that are given to all Canadians. That is one of the hallmarks of this federation, that we recognize the fact that all Canadians should be treated equally.

However, trying to answer a hypothetical question as posed by the Reform Party would be like asking one of my predecessors elected in 1962 whether he foresees the election of the Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois 32 years down the road. It is very difficult to make those kinds of assumptions that moneys will not be there.

The economy is evolving and changes are taking place. Of course, our government is taking charge of our finances. The Minister of Finance is doing a commendable job. We have to keep in mind that also our Minister of Human Resources Development wants to consult Canadians. That is one of the reasons why we are out there asking Canadians to put something into the system.

We want to consult them and I am sure we are going to get all kinds of proposals and solutions outside this Parliament which we do not regrettably receive from the opposition benches.

• (1135)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise and address this bill, but I also wish to address the larger debate that is going on across the country and really the one that has been going on this morning and that is with respect to the social program review that is currently under way.

To have a good understanding of the social program review I think it is very important that we go back and look at the genesis of this idea and the genesis of the debate. Probably the first thing we should do is point out that during the last election campaign the Liberals across the way did not even mention social program reform as an issue. It was as though it did not exist.

There was an interesting article in the *Ottawa Citizen* from October 14:

During the election, then Prime Minister Kim Campbell stepped on a land mine by declaring a campaign was the "worst possible time" to discuss social policy reform. Jean Chrétien criticized her heavily and tiptoed around the same land mine with the following assurance: "I say that the programs are there and they will remain the same—".