

Government Orders

payments that encourage recipients to welfare when adjustment payments run out.

We strongly support the freezes we are applying to ourselves in line with this, freezes to senior people in government and to members of Parliament. We would also take this opportunity to urge the government once more to make substantial cuts in benefit related areas to members of Parliament that are out of line with standards the public expects.

I refer specifically to the MP pension plan. Even the contribution levels of members of Parliament to that plan exceed normal contribution to a plan. On top of that, the government is now matching our contributions on a six to one basis to preserve the soundness of the plan over the long haul.

This simply cannot be justified at this time. I call on the government once again to bring in serious measures to cut back the benefit of this plan. It should ensure that the tremendous liabilities which have built up are not simply the responsibility of the taxpayer and that some of the current recipients who quite unjustifiably and quite irresponsibly voted themselves this kind of defined benefit also share in the reduction of the costs of the plan over the long run.

In addition I raise the concern we have in this party about non-accountable expense allowances being used as supplementary pay. These allowances are substantial. I receive a cheque of \$3,000 a month for my work here but then I receive an extra \$1,775 for an expense allowance for which I do not have to account. I have absolutely no problem in saying that my expenses as a member of Parliament are high and I will account for them. However I know the total value of that particular money plus the additional expense accounts in our operating budgets exceeds the expenses I incur. I am certain they exceed the expenses incurred by members who live much closer to Ottawa. That is something the House should re-examine while it is looking at the compensation of ordinary public sector workers.

Part II of the bill concerns reductions in transfer payments to the provinces, specifically in the area of the Canada Assistance Plan and the public utilities income tax transfer arrangements. I will not comment on those at great length here because I want to do so when I am finished my more general remarks. Let me just say in summary that these measures in many ways are an extension of some existing policies of government.

Nevertheless we have concerns. We do support the fact—and we said during the campaign that the government was realizing it—that transfer payments to the provinces are substantial and will be affected by any kind of long term deficit reduction plan. We are seeing the government do that. Nevertheless it is doing it without a plan. We have some specific concerns with some of the

proposals here and where exactly they are going. I will discuss that in a few minutes.

Part III of the bill concerns reduction in transportation subsidies extending and deepening some reductions in the area of subsidies both to Atlantic sectors and to western grain sectors of our economy. During the campaign our party had called for a general reduction in money spent in the area of subsidies to transportation.

• (1240)

We would prefer rolling together all grain transportation moneys for farmers along with other agricultural programs into a series of two or three programs. That would basically have the effect of giving individual farmers much more choice in how they utilize government assistance, particularly in the area of the type of transportation and the methods of transportation chosen to move their product. That is the direction in which we would like to go.

We emphasize, though, that we only support the continuation of these subsidies as long as there is not an equal playing field with regard to the farm situation internationally. We favour a multilateral approach through the GATT to reducing these international subsidies. In line with that we would see our subsidies drop as well.

I note that this question came up once before in the House of Commons. The government insisted that was everyone's position but of course it is not. There are people in this country and particularly in other countries who are opposed in principle to any kind of reduction in this area. We will not sacrifice our farm sector when other farm sectors are not experiencing similar reductions.

Part IV of the bill, as I indicated, is the part that perhaps gives us the greatest difficulty. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is being given its own borrowing authority for the first time in its history in the magnitude of \$25 million. This is a thinly veiled attempt to give the CBC more money without increasing its direct grants. We have already seen the government restructure the downsizing, the subsidy reduction program to the CBC, and spread it over a number of years to allow it to be less costly to the broadcasting corporation and more costly to taxpayers.

What assurances do we have that in next year's request for moneys the CBC will not include the increased costs of paying back these loans as yet another financial need? In other words it could be a backdoor way for the CBC to get increased funding once again.

In our view there will have to be a thorough examination of whether we support a large or small reduction to the budget of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, a significant re-evaluation of its role and its mandate. Particularly as technology