

The Budget

As we embark on the national debate about our social security systems, I find myself a little uncertain about the outcome.

Because of the pressure that has been placed on the economy and the social safety net by the recession there appears to be an almost panic mentality that has taken place. Get on with it is what everyone seems to say.

Because of my promise to the people of Beaches—Woodbine on social justice and jobs, I will do everything in my power to ensure that appropriate time is given and taken to ensure that the social safety net review is carried out in a worthwhile manner.

There is a great deal of talk of the stress that social programs have put on the economy but we must also look at the stress that the economy has put on the social programs. Despite some of the holes in our safety net this held out very well despite the huge demands we have put on it.

I believe that the social security system that we will need in the future should be one that can address the needs of Canadians from cradle to grave. It must be a system that is comprehensive, holistic in approach, completely accessible to all and flexible. People now are often falling between the programs.

This may mean a guaranteed income supplement. We have had a form of guaranteed income supplement in this country for quite some time. The old age security system, unemployment insurance and the way we have used them in eastern Canada has been a form of that.

We will have to make some fundamental choices, however. For instance, the labour market is changing with low value, short term and part time jobs on the increase. What choices will we make in the need for continuous upgrading of skills, the type of day care available and retirement planning?

Apart from the real fact that the comprehensive child care program is essential, if we are to have a chance at succeeding with upgrading, retraining and development of programs I believe it is our collective responsibility to ensure that children are cared for. The physical and mental well-being of children will mean healthy and well adjusted adults.

• (1015)

Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. I attended a youth conference in Toronto on Tuesday of this week. It was attended by some 200 young people from all walks of life. Some had received welfare and were now on the youth employment program. Some were university graduates out of work and some were single parents on social assistance. The one thing they all had in common was their desire to want to work and their concern that maybe we, the baby boomers, were not interested in their concerns, did not understand their plight and did not have a commitment to tackle the problems that they are facing.

They made very insightful observations about the strengths and weaknesses of the current social assistance programs and their recommendations I thought were very practical and realistic. These are some of their statements:

"Most kids decide what to do by grade 10. They either stay in school or they drop out. So why can we not start apprenticeship as a career choice at grade 10". "I was asked to move back home in order to receive employment and training assistance", said another. "I have not lived at home since I was 15, so why am I going to move back now"?

Yet another: "I had to drop out of my college program because student aid was not enough and welfare would not pay if I received student aid. I now owe \$3,000 in student loans, but still do not have an education. I really want to be an interior decorator".

Grants for students should come back.

They refer to themselves as the lost generation. They asked me if the government was really serious about addressing their needs. I said that if we did not do anything at this time and did not move quickly, we would be totally negligent and very stupid. They are the future of this country and we must meet their needs.

Social programs might cost more than we would like at first, but in the long run we save. If a young person is working they pay taxes. They will be able to create other jobs as they build their own businesses.

A comprehensive child care program allows parents to work and results in healthier children and we will save on further social costs.

Finally, the cost of the delivery of the programs does not necessarily have to be as costly as it is today. If we use an integrative approach instead of a selective approach and utilize all existing infrastructures such as schools for child care, the voluntary sector, and developed one stop shopping for all three levels of government it might just save some money. Economic renewal does not have to be at the expense of social justice. In fact, I believe that a strong social justice system will aid economic development

As I stated at the outset I am the first Liberal since confederation to stand in the House and represent the people of Beaches—Woodbine. And, yes, I do consider this an honour. The Beaches part of the riding's name derives from the fact that we have the best area of beach in metropolitan Toronto. Every summer and throughout the year thousands of people from outside the riding descend on the beaches and become honorary beachers for several hours of a day.

Our international jazz festival attracts upwards of 60,000 people, devotees of jazz across North America. The beach