

Supply

phy on retirement combines realism with compassion, something the Reform Party should think about.

The Reform Party should also think its proposals through before presenting them and should come clean on how much impact it would have on the lives of Canadians and the social fabric of this great nation.

The government certainly welcomes constructive suggestions from hon. members on the opposite side of the House. The proposals we see in the Reform Party's taxpayers' budget are so poorly thought out that it simply does not give us anything valid to work with.

The popularity of the budget by the Minister of Finance speaks for itself. Canadians recognize that in order to retain strong, viable social programs we have to find the financial resources to fund them. That is why Canadians support the direction the government is taking. With the Canada social transfer we are entering a new era of social policy that will streamline our social security system and bring us into the 21st century.

As a nation that enjoys one of the highest standards of living, there is no doubt in my mind Canadians reject the simplistic notion embodied in today's motion. They know the government is committed to the renewal of Canada's great legacy of social programs. I am sure they share my belief that the Reform Party is in no position to enact the motion before us today.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to this speech. There were a couple of anomalies within it which we should think about.

● (1050)

She indicated this was an old thinking, knee-jerk reaction. To me that is an oxymoron. Knee-jerk is something not thought of before.

The principles we are espousing are based on both experience and thinking. We have found the country did best when there was the least amount of government, when there was less intrusion. To now say we should once again use those principles of self-sufficiency and encourage people to look after themselves and making it possible for them to do that is not knee-jerk. That is good, solid thinking.

The member said Canadians reject this. She said that several times. That is not my experience. I have shared this concept with a number of people for over a year. I am pleased the ideas we had are now coming forward in the House. I have yet to hear a single person indicate anything but enthusiasm for this concept.

With respect to the reduction of old age security benefits, the member made mention that Reform is saying we are going to cut back. I want to make it very clear, I want everyone to know we are forced into this, not by what Reform is doing but what governments over the last 30 years have done. We have run out

of money and the Reform policy is to target the remaining money, as little as there is, to those who have true need.

When we are talking about reducing old age security, we are talking about reducing to those who do not need it because they have an income over the national average.

We would be most honest with Canadians if we were to say the Canada pension plan is at risk because we will not have the money. That is the result of Liberal and Conservatives governments. That has to come to an end.

Ms. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has not heard the Prime Minister mention on several occasions that the taxpayers' budget proposed by the Reform Party has forgotten to take into account that our population is aging. The costs of old age security for our seniors will rise every year. It is not in the Reform budget. Maybe the member should take a look at that part and think it through.

The Reform Party constantly claims over and over again that it represents the people, the interests of Canadians and listens to polls and to Canadians. When 80 per cent of Canadians respond telling us they support public programs for elderly care, does that not send a message to the Reform Party? It should send a message to a party that claims to represent the people. When it hears that 77 per cent support public programs for child care and other programs, does that not send a message? I would think it sends a message.

I would ask the Reform Party to take a look at our budget. Our budget talks about the problems we are going to face. It talks about the fact that we have to deal with old age security and all of our social programs, especially relating to our seniors. The budget has the foresight to deal with that.

Perhaps the Reform Party should actually read the budget.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, our budget does take into account the fact that the population is aging and that our social programs are unsustainable.

The hon. member should realize that in a few short years we will be paying up to 15 per cent of our income into the pension fund alone to meet the expectations of those retiring in a short time.

The member said social security programs are anything but dead. The studies by the Liberal government show the pension plan is in big trouble. There is less than two years of funds in the pension fund for payouts. The liability in this fund is about as great as our national debt, at over \$500 billion. That is the liability in this fund.

● (1055)

This does not give Canadians security. It should be immediately obvious to everyone in the House when you have that kind of liability it is not sustainable, the opposite of security.