

*Government Orders*

assistance now probably laying someone off. Our program in this particular instance does not work.

We also have to look at such things as interprovincial trade barriers. The Atlantic provinces, for example, receive economic development grants as do other regions of Canada. Just to put it into perspective, the cost to the Atlantic provinces of interprovincial trade barriers exceeds the benefit they get from the economic development grants. Obviously we have some changes we could make there that will enhance the prosperity of the region and take the pressure in some areas off of the social programs.

We have the salmon fisheries on the west coast. The salmon fisheries are now headed down the road that many of the Atlantic fisheries have already travelled. We have a problem out there and this problem has to be dealt with. It has to be dealt with openly and quickly or we are going to have the same kind of problems in the west, at least in the fishing industry, that Atlantic Canada has experienced for many years.

We then have the firearms legislation. We are now talking it seems about the registration of rifles and shotguns, anywhere from seven to twenty-one million of these rifles and shotguns depending on whose figures one uses. Let us say it is probably somewhere in the middle between those two figures. The expected cost of that could run as high as a billion dollars or even more. That is a cost to the taxpayer.

Even if we charge an amount for each registration that is equal to the cost of the government registering them, it is still removing a billion dollars out of our economy that is doing absolutely nothing to resolve any of the other pressing problems of government or the deficit and debt problem.

RRSPs are probably one of the most dangerous things that the government is playing with right now because it is trying to get some revenue out of possibly attacking RRSPs, the cost of which will be future problems down the road. If we have a shortage now because we are trying to pay pensions and other benefits to people who in some cases do not need it, think of the problems we are going to have further down the road when we are telling people they have to be more responsible for themselves, they have to look after themselves if they are able to do so when we potentially may set in force legislation today which will affect their ability to look after themselves somewhere down the road.

On the unemployment insurance commission, before we can go out to industry and start attacking industry that we feel may not be acting in the country's best interest, the government has to get its own house in order. The minister responsible for UIC specifically singled out the automotive industry. Maybe he should. Maybe there is a problem there. I am not an expert in that area but what I do know is that there is five times the cost that the auto industry causes the unemployment insurance program right in the government to the point that it is costing some \$400 million a year because of seasonal benefits in the government. The government cannot attack industry until it has its own house in order.

• (1700)

Under the question of consultation there is a problem that I have seen. I realize that this is my opinion and the government is free to counter it. I have seen a lot of instances in different bills in which the government loves to have a long list of all those groups it has consulted with. When we see this list of businesses, organizations and individuals who have been consulted with, we are supposed to assume that the government then automatically has listened to the input from these people it has consulted with and drawn its legislation based on that.

We know the reality is that does not happen. The most prime example is the Minister of Justice again. The Minister of Justice has been quoted as saying with regard to the firearms lobby: "I will not produce legislation on the basis of head count. I will do what I believe is the right thing". This could be very easily interpreted as: "I do not care what you want, I know better".

Reform consultation is ongoing on this particular thing as it is with the Liberal members in their various ridings. We are going to great length in trying to consult with people to find out what changes they will accept, what alternatives they have to suggest and how they see we should deal with the problem. The question is will the government consider our input after we have had this consultation or will it continue with its own agenda?

I am having quite a number of meetings in my own riding. I am setting up to meet with pension groups, medical professionals, education professionals, labour groups, employer groups and student associations. In addition, to get a feeling of the general constituents in my riding I am holding ten town hall meetings over the winter break.

With regard to dealing with student groups, I have a particular concern that we do not make significant further cuts to transfer payments in support of post-secondary education. We talk about government spending in the past. Whether it be Liberal or Conservative does not matter. We are here now and that is what happened in the past. Nonetheless we are in a situation in which we have mortgaged our children's and grandchildren's futures.

When we start dealing with student groups we have to recognize that we have already placed a huge penalty upon these people. Let us not add to that by placing another obstacle in their way to their getting the implements they need to deal with the legacy of debt we have left them.