

*Government Orders*

The one question that we cannot answer yet is what is the result of the program review. The Minister of Finance has set targets for every department. The Prime Minister has said every department will have a program review. We are all looking at how we can eliminate duplication, how we can eliminate waste and how we can change programs. There is a lot of it to be done.

That is one reason why I think that we are prepared with provinces to do a lot of guichets uniques, to co-locate, to eliminate a lot of excess. We are working with provinces now. There is money to be saved.

**Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice):** We have signed an agreement with every one of them but one.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** That is right. That is one reason we have put on the table a new labour market agreement with the provinces which talks about transferring responsibility, which talks about rationalizing programs, which talks about transferring money for training to the provinces so that we can provide a much clearer definition of responsibilities. We can save money on that but the decision has not been taken yet.

That is why we have a consultation, a budget process that will start with the department of finance, a committee of finance, a consultation on social review, and those decisions will be taken. When they are taken we will make them clear. We will make them public. We cannot announce what we have not decided.

I know members opposite sometimes do that. I know they like to speculate. There is even the odd newspaper reporter or two who get into that sort of frenzy, saying: "I think I know what I believe", and therefore prints on the front page of a newspaper.

The fact of the matter is we believe that we have to have as part of this exercise a recognition and a responsibility to have fiscal stability in this country. If we do not, then what is clear is that our social policy decisions will not be made by Canadians. They will be made by bond dealers in New York. They will start telling us.

Right now if we look at the expenditure pattern, we spend close to \$40 billion on these programs that we are talking about and about \$40 billion on the interest. If we do not make changes in the programs and reallocate in 10 years time we will be spending \$50 billion on interest and \$29 billion on social programs. I think all Canadians regardless of political stripe recognize that something has to be done.

That is why we are prepared to try to face up to those responsibilities in a clear, sound way, not by simply saying take \$15 billion, slash every program in sight, do not try to reform, do not try to make them better, simply cut the programs. That is

not the way to do it. Canadians did not elect us to do that. They elected us to use our intelligence and our creative powers to make better programs, not simply to break down existing programs. There is a major difference in that approach.

Those are the options and choices that we have in this green paper. That is the kind of discussion and dialogue that we have to begin to generate beginning today in this House, to show Canadians that we can face new realities, that we can use our best creative powers to come up with better ideas, that we are open and listening and that Parliament is the real forum for this country. It is the crucible where these kinds of answers and solutions will be found, not in the think tanks, not in the interest groups, but here in Parliament where we represent the people.

We can do it right. I fully expect that there will be some difference of opinion. I do not know whether the debate today will immediately result in a consensus but if it does not then I hope we will have those differences expressed in the most constructive way possible, in a way that really gives people a sense that Parliament can work positively, progressively, constructively and not simply become a forum for going after one another.

● (1125)

That is the kind of spirit that we have to create. I am going to use a story that I have used many times. I see that the members from the Reform Party are getting impatient. I guess they do not like staying in Parliament too long. There is no problem in the future for that, four years and they will be gone.

This is a little story that really summarizes what I hope will infuse the spirit of debate in this House and throughout the country. It happened in New Brunswick where I visited a small training program for women on social assistance. It was set up jointly by the federal and provincial governments.

I was talking to the women in that program and asked them how it was working. One of the women said: "I was not too sure, it is darn hard coming back to school but after five or six months I realized how important it was because a couple of days ago, I was able to help my seven-year old daughter with her homework. For the first time I was able to show that we were now able to work together as a mother and a child".

She said: "I wrote a little saying. I hope that you will tell other Canadians how important it is. As a result of the kind of experience I have had here", the kind of thing that we are promoting in this green book, an effort to find new ways of getting people some hope and dignity, "never be afraid to reach for the moon because even if you miss, you will be among the stars".