

Government Orders

who are having their support system removed by Bills C-20, C-69 and C-32—and the Draconian cuts in transfer payments, annual deficits have been stalled at approximately \$30 billion and now the national debt is expected to reach \$450 billion by the next general election.

Federal social spending as a percentage of GDP has declined from 8.1 per cent in 1984-85 to 7.1 per cent in 1990-91. One lesson to be learned from this experiment by the Conservatives is that spending cuts without social investment simply do not work.

The way that we have proceeded for many generations and will continue to proceed in our social policy in contrast with the government is as follows: First is a recognition that medicare is the practical and symbolic cornerstone of Canada's achievement as a caring society. The Liberal Party began medicare. We funded it properly, we shored it up with the Canada Health Act and we will do whatever we have to do in the nineties to maintain it.

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Second is a recognition that tax reform and social policy go hand in hand. Today an increasing number of working families cannot make ends meet. One purpose of federal tax policy should be to ensure that working Canadians have every available opportunity to get jobs, day care, education and housing.

Third, economic growth and social policy are two sides of the same coin. You cannot have one without the other.

Fourth, child poverty does not begin and end with children; it is intergenerational. Eradicating poverty among Canada's children requires us to deal with child care, nutrition, family violence, job preparation, housing, among several other programs.

Fifth, because social policy is an integral component of Canadian identity, the protection of a Canadian way will be included in all international trade agreements.

There are choices that Canadians can make. Through pieces of legislation which may appear minor and are short in their text, Canadians are being presented with an agenda which is very negative and very destructive to their well-being. Canadians are turning to other parties, not so much for support for their position, because I think Canadians all feel that way, but because they want

us to present alternatives. They want to see that other parties are thinking about ways of improving their society.

The policy process within this party, within this caucus, has been a very active one for the last two years. Thirty position papers have been produced on a whole number of issues, including social policy and tax reform. There will be a national convention in February which will present many of these ideas to the nation for consideration. There will be preparation for the next general election. People will see that at least one group of men and women have spent their time productively in the last four years, that it has not only been in opposition to the government, but it has also been in support of doing things a different way.

Perhaps through this process of formulating new ideas Canadians will begin to appreciate the protest parties, whether it be the BQ in Quebec or the Reform Party in the west. For example, Preston Manning, the leader of the Reform Party, says he would abolish the Canada Health Act. That would mean abolishing universality and allowing the introduction of user fees.

Perhaps once these debates begin to take place seriously, Canadians will understand where they should turn to for support for programs as fundamental to the future of this country as medicare, as well as CAP and a number of other programs, one of which, believe it or not, is day care. At the very time that this government has been hinting with one announcement after another that there is going to be a broad initiative dealing with child poverty, it has also gone about capping CAP, which has had exactly the opposite effect. It cuts down the room that provinces have to manoeuvre within the fundamentals of our society.

For the last year and a half a subcommittee of the House of Commons has been reviewing issues of poverty. This committee heard from one group after another. Our caucus committee heard from many other groups. We began to formulate some ideas about what should be done to deal with this issue. We stood up against Bills C-20 and C-32 and will continue to fight Bill C-32. However, we have also seen that Canadians are anxious that something be done right away. If you are creating debt, let us be clear about it. This government does not create wealth; it creates debt. It creates about \$30 billion worth of debt a year and does not know what to do with it all. Instead of creating debt, which then in turn has to be