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ensure that Canadians are capable of functioning at a high level in the rapidly expanding global economy.

We all know that today's motion is based on the ill conceived quasi-budget of the Reform Party and that document in turn owed more than a little to the Reform minority report on social security reform which contained proposals that the member proposing today's motion conceded were not thought through very well before they were rushed into print.

I am most concerned by the Reform's so-called proposals. After examining them it is clear to me that these are old knee-jerk ideas that would move us backward, not forward. I cannot see how Reform's proposals would help Canadians find meaningful employment and reduce social ills such as child poverty.

The Reform Party has come up with the catchy title "Taxpayers' Budget". However when Canadian taxpayers get a close look at it they will see that if we adopted it taxpayers are the ones who would be snagged.

First let us look at the subject of today's motion, the registered personal security plan or RPSP. As I understand it, Reform wants to replace UI, OAS, CPP and some health, education and training programs with an individually based savings plan. This means that when sickness or unemployment strike or when they take their retirement, Canadians will be expected to rely on their own means and the risk pooling features of our current social programs would disappear.

Obviously lower income Canadians would be much more adversely affected by the proposal. I can see nothing in it except for the very well off who would have yet another instrument for feathering their nest egg.

Next let us take Reform's proposals for UI. The party suggests cutting \$3.4 billion from the UI program. That is easy to do on paper but the result in real terms would phase out maternity, parental and sickness benefits as well as the fishermen's program. The measure alone would take away maternity benefits from more than 160,000 new mothers, sickness benefits from 150,000 workers who are temporarily unemployed, and badly needed benefits for 30,000 fishermen.

Who will shoulder the burden to help these individuals? Removing regional benefits would affect 1.3 million unemployed workers, which is more than 50 per cent of UI claimants. The Reform Party would slash income support by \$4.5 billion. This blanket insensitive approach would drain billions out of the provincial economies—hardly what I would call a responsible move.

This is not what Canadians want. As I have already outlined the government intends to revitalize its UI program. We need to look carefully at how and why people use unemployment insurance and then make adjustments accordingly. We will not wipe out key social benefits like those for maternity leave.

• (1045)

The Reform Party tries to put forward a social conscience with its principle of equality contributions. Its taxpayers' budget states the burden of reduction must fall least heavily on the most vulnerable members of society.

There is no doubt that all hon. members share those sentiments. The trouble is Reform's proposals would have exactly the opposite effect. Instead of helping those most in need, the taxpayers' budget would cut seniors' pensions by \$3 billion. How will this measure help vulnerable seniors meet the cost of living?

Reform also proposes that the government eliminate all regional differentiation. How will this help the poorest regions of the country? It also suggests cutting aboriginal programs by 24 per cent. Someone will have to explain to me how this measure will help our aboriginal brothers and sisters who are quite possibly the neediest group in Canada.

The Reform Party's budget suggests cutting the Canada assistance plan transfer payments by 34 per cent and equalization payments by \$3 billion, a 35 per cent cut. If the government did that I acknowledge it would certainly lessen the burden on federal coffers. Unfortunately it would devastate the poorest regions of the country. It would place the burden of deficit reduction on the most vulnerable members of society. It would contradict Reform's stated philosophy.

Cuts like these would not renew our social security system. They would outright destroy it. Reform's approach to deficit reduction is simply reckless. It is easy to be reckless when one is not in the driver's seat.

What about the proposal to slash \$3 billion from seniors' pensions? The Reform does not provide any details on this proposal maybe because if it had done so it would have had to tell elderly Canadians that more than half of them would see their benefits cut and low income seniors would be among the losers.

The government's approach is to review the needs of seniors into the next century and determine how best to meet those needs. We are not saying there should be no changes. We have never said that. However, a responsible government examines the repercussions of changes before taking action, and that is what we are doing.

Reform wants to replace old age security and the Canada pension plan with an RRSP and registered personal security plan system. The concept has already been tried in the United States. It is called a personal bank account. It actually works very well provided one is fortunate enough to be wealthy. Those less fortunate are out in the cold.

The Liberal Party's policy is for a sound and efficient income system that provides a balance between public pensions and private arrangements. In other words, the government's philoso-