

Government Orders

expenditures will grow roughly in line with increases in the Gross National Product.

The federal government is abrogating its moral responsibility to disadvantaged Canadians. The federal government says it will save \$2.4 billion. It will save \$2.4 billion on the backs of the needy. It is unconscionable. I do not understand it.

Will this money go to debt reduction? Why is debt reduction the responsibility of those people who are on low income, or those people who are not able to provide for themselves? I have to give the government, certainly, a failing grade on that point.

By its action the government is continuing its agenda of transferring the burden of the national debt and the federal deficit reduction on to the backs of the provinces and municipalities. This is abrogating the responsibility. It is a must; the provinces have to provide that. They cannot back out of it, and yet the federal government is certainly backing out of it.

We on this side of the House do not support this government's measures that transfer the burden of the national debt and the federal deficit reduction on to the backs of poor Canadians. We do not support it in that.

A Supreme Court judgment may have given the government the legal right to cut welfare transfers to the provinces, but it did not provide the government with the moral right to abandon its responsibility to poor and disadvantaged Canadians.

It also appears that the current amendment violates the spirit of federal-provincial co-operation which has marked the 24-year history of CAP. This is the first time in the history of CAP that the federal government has acted unilaterally to change its provisions.

In abrogating its commitment to contribute equally with the provinces to the alleviation and prevention of poverty, the federal government is throwing out that sacred trust of Canada's social programs.

CAP is the fundamental and minimum element of Canada's social safety net. Again, as I said, I am pleased to stand here. I am very displeased with this government. I would dearly hope that it could reconsider its actions and recognize the importance of maintaining that contribution, that payment to the provinces and to the municipalities.

It is the government's responsibility. It is my responsibility as a legislator, and it really grieves me that it has taken this action.

Mr. Mike Breough (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few moments to participate in this debate because I think there is a need to put on the record some of the concerns many members would share with me that they picked up over the last few months working in their ridings.

Part of the problem is that government, in a real broad sense of the word, has changed. There may well have been a time when a government could express a political philosophy and kind of live its parliamentary life in splendid isolation. The people it governed did not really know what kind of a lifestyle the members would lead, what Parliament was up to and all the little things that governments do.

In a modern age, people see the day-by-day occurrences of life in Parliament, of life in government, of how governments spend their money. The newspapers are full of accounts of massive expenditures that do not work and of large amounts of money that have been spent on projects that never will function.

They see, for example, the way a cabinet minister carries out his or her duties. Someone stands in this Chamber and preaches restraint and then goes outside and gets into a limousine that has a driver, and the people of Canada see that. Perhaps they should not be making their judgments in this way, but they do. They do not have an understanding of what is meant inside the Chamber when someone preaches restraint but outside takes a limousine and a driver to the airport, and flies first class to some great meeting somewhere else in the world. They see that in a much different light than members of Parliament would and they see it in very hard and critical terms.

• (1530)

Perhaps they knew that governments across the board at all levels had frankly said: "We cannot afford to do things in the same way as we always have and so we will not have any more great conferences. We will not fly deputy ministers around the world to learn how to govern. We will not do a great many things that this government has, on the record, reportedly done."