

Government Orders

I recall meeting with people from the National Association of Food Banks. I asked what is the one single thing that we can do for children in this country. The answer was get some more money in their hands. That is why we have to combine those benefits and go to work to do it.

I understand this will not be easy. We have to really rely upon full scale co-operation by all levels of government. That is why we will be appealing to our colleagues. For those governments that say they do not want to participate they are condemning the children of those provinces to serious problems in the future. They are creating problems for the future. That is why it is going to be so essential that we spend the next couple of years mobilizing a good will and tapping into the potential for goodwill which I think exists in this country. I think Canadians want to help their kids. I think we have now come to a recognition that it is time we made this a national priority.

This government will take the leadership with our provincial colleagues to put that first on the agenda and make sure that the next generation of children will not suffer the same problems as this generation of children.

That is the point of this debate. That is the reason for getting ideas out and getting a dialogue going. I welcome them. I do not expect everyone is going to agree with us. I would be surprised if they did. However, there are some good examples.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): I have been around for 30 years.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): I always agree with the Prime Minister.

Bob White, head of the Canadian Labour Congress, put out what I thought was a positive statement. He said: "I do not agree with parts of the report. I take exception to some of the issues on unemployment insurance, but I am prepared to engage in a constructive debate. I am prepared to put my ideas and those of my membership on the table". That is the right spirit, not total rejection, not angry rhetoric without substance, not the kind of posturing that we see from so many who say we cannot do anything.

Mr. Silye: Not cheap shots.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Not cheap shots. That is a good example. I am glad the member from the Reform Party said that because I saw his leader on television last night who had a string of cheap shots, one after the other. I hope he will pass this along.

Before I conclude, let us deal with one other very important element of this proposal which is this clear linkage that exists between proposals for social reform and how it affects the broader economy.

The Prime Minister announced in Quebec City about two and a half weeks ago that this is one part of a broad national agenda the government wants to put forward. In about 10 days or so the

Minister of Finance will be putting forward a paper on economic growth and fiscal requirements. That will be followed by another paper by the Minister of Industry concerning job creation and how to stimulate private sector growth and activity. They are all linked together. They are all part of the same effort to get people back to work and to restructure the fundamentals of this country.

In doing so, that is one reason why we also have to address the fiscal reality of the country. For those who simply say do not make cuts and do not touch the budget, they are not living in the real world. We all know that everybody has to take a hard look at where we spend the money. The Leader of the Opposition said that he does not believe we can do more with less.

I suppose having been a member of the Mulroney government for nine years I can understand why he would have that philosophy. It did less with more. That was its problem. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will be able to overcome his particular disadvantage having been nurtured under that government which when he participated did not have social reform in an open participatory way but did it by stealth. Does the member of that government recall that he was responsible as a member of that cabinet for major slashing of the unemployment insurance program, clawbacks to senior citizen pensions, major changes on higher education, all of those? Now he is the great defender of the status quo. No wonder, look at the status quo he created. Who wants his status quo?

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Talk about a leopard changing his spots. How about a leopard with all kinds of coloured spots, you never know which one defines who the leopard is; change parties, change spots, change positions, change philosophies. It does not matter. It is a new interchangeable system that we are in these days.

What we are saying very clearly, and it is outlined on page 23 of the book, is that there is a fiscal parameter that we have to work with. In the February 1994 budget it stated that we would make changes to unemployment insurance which would realize \$2.2 billion in savings which we have recycled back into other programs and into reducing the premium to create jobs in this country.

We also announced that we would hold transfer payments at the 1993-94 level and that would gain a saving of \$1.5 billion.

We are already talking in the area of \$5 billion. We made that very clear. I have indicated that as a result of these changes that we are proposing in the paper, a restructuring, I would like to see another target of 10 per cent in cuts in unemployment insurance so we can again use the money to create the literacy programs, the educational programs, the training programs, the job employment programs and the reduction of premium programs so that we can get Canadians back to work. We have said that very explicitly, very clearly.