

Government Orders

Here is another opportunity lost. Never at any other time in recent history has this country required strong leadership in so many different areas. HRD is no different. HRD affects the lives of those who are in the lowest socioeconomic situations within our country.

We sympathize with the government in the position it faces. Indeed it is a difficult one. However, it is not an excuse for inaction, particularly since we as a party have put forward strong solutions to address these very important areas. Our HRD areas are in critical shape. They are in effect ready to fall apart.

On the one hand, we have an increase in demand. On the other hand, with an increasing debt we have less money to spend on social programs. An important fact is that by the year 2010 the combination of payments on the interest and all the payments on social programs will consume every single dollar and every penny that comes into the federal coffers. What is the government going to do when that day comes? It is only 15 years from now. What is it going to do?

We need intelligent plans in order to put social programs on a firm fiscal footing. The consequence of not doing that is to face collapse. Those who are going to suffer the most are those who are in greatest need. It is not the people in this room who are going to suffer; it is the people in soup kitchens, the people who cannot feed their children anything but macaroni and cheese, the people who are unemployable and the people who are not making ends meet. They are the ones who are going to hit the wall. They are the ones who are going to have to pick up the pieces, but they will not be able to pick up the pieces.

• (1040)

The Reform Party has been accused of being a slash and burn party. I would not have joined this party and my colleagues would not have joined it if that were the case. I believe that every member of Parliament is committed to ensuring that social programs will continue in the future. We do not want to see people suffer. However, to sit around and do nothing is the single greatest threat to social programs. Inaction threatens social programs. It is causing them to implode. Health care is being rationed. Social programs are being rationed. There have been cuts across the board in welfare. That is what is preventing the people who truly need the programs from being able to live a healthy life.

Those who suffer the most are the children. They are not receiving the proper nutrition. They do not have the ability to grow up to be healthy and strong.

We spend \$19.1 billion on old age security. The cost of that is increasing rapidly. It is out of control. Within the next 15 years the number of seniors will increase by 40 per cent. How will we pay for this? There is absolutely no plan for providing OAS to these people.

The Canada pension plan is \$500 billion in debt. This is not accounted for in the debt figures. It is not actuarially sound, and there is no plan to change it.

The Reform Party has put forward a plan for super RRSPs. I hope the government will seriously look at that plan and work with us on the program to ensure that the people who need it will receive both the OAS and the CPP.

I would like to make some constructive suggestions. First, we have to decrease duplication and decentralize. It was a tragedy that the referendum was based in part on decentralization, because that is going to have to happen in every province across the country. For the country to be carved up partly over decentralization is a tragedy, because it is inevitable.

In fact clause 6 of the bill does the opposite. It strengthens the hand of the federal government rather than decentralizing powers. Decentralizing powers does not mean that people will suffer. By doing that, duplication will be decreased and more money will be provided to the end user.

The government can take a leadership role by working with the provinces in providing a minimum standard across the board to create similar standards for the provinces and ensure that those provinces that are the most impoverished will not suffer. It is a challenge, but it can be met.

Second, we have to prioritize spending. It makes no sense to me that when we are prioritizing spending we cut across the board. That cuts from everybody, those who are abusing the program as well as those who are not.

In British Columbia they looked at welfare. They looked at 780 people. Of that number, 280 were flagrantly abusing the system and did not need to be on welfare. They stopped after looking at 780 people; it was too inflammatory for them to continue. That is a lot of people. That money could be better spent in bringing down the debt and also in ensuring that the people who need it will get it. Cutting across the board only makes those who are the poorest suffer more.

We should focus on skills training. Let us make sure there is enough money in the pot to provide skills for the unemployed.

We also need to decrease the tax load. We have heard much about taxing the rich and corporations. However, the reality is that small and medium sized businesses are creating the jobs in our country.

• (1045)

What are these businesses telling us? They say that we cannot compete with other countries with our existing tax load. Many of the closed shops and closed industries and much of the exodus of companies south are in large part due to the fact that their tax