

Government Orders

Members can stand up and try to defend that. I do not want to sound just like a person whining about my region. That is not the total picture. We need to look at all of Canada. I submit very seriously that if it is good for one province, it is good for the country. We need to seriously ask ourselves the question whether such an inequitable tax is good for the country because it differentiates between Canadians based on their situations.

• (1700)

I have appreciated the opportunity to speak on this matter. I would be delighted to respond to any questions members have.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member used some words that seemed a little contradictory. In one instance he was admonishing the members to vote the way they believe, yet depending on some other questions, the member is admonishing members to vote along with their constituents. I simply raise this contradiction. If the member really believed that, then he along with at least the other three Reform Party members who are supporting gun control would also represent their constituents and vote for gun control.

The Reform Party took the liberty to produce a pro forma budget to put on the table what its plans would be. As we all know, they were basically to trash social programs and particularly to tax seniors. In the hypothetical situation that the Reform Party did form a government and did have that budget, would the member admit here and now that the Reform Party would have to borrow at least \$100 billion before the deficit would be reduced to zero over the term of the mandate?

Mr. Epp: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to what is indeed a very good question.

The hon. member used the word that our prebudget suggested trashing the social programs. Those were the words he used. There is a huge difference between trashing something and replacing it with something better. There is a huge difference between breaking down a house and leaving a hole in the ground and breaking down an old house in order to make room to build a new and better one.

If we were to analyse what the Reform Party is proposing for social programs, it is proposing a better system. We believe in individualizing social security so as to do away with all of the problems which arise when UIC and social security are competing.

The poor person on UIC or social security has to refuse a job at \$8 an hour because if he or she makes a little money in effect they are taxed 100 per cent on it. There is a tremendous disincentive to taking a part time job because of the loss of benefits. If that were individualized according to our plan, then the individual could take a part time job, supplement their

income and use their personal retirement and their personal security plan only as needed to top up in order to meet the needs of the day.

If the member would like to take the time to do the arithmetic on it, I would be pleased to sit down and help him with this. If he were to do the actuarial math on how the money grows, if he were to look at the employer's and employee's contributions he would see how they grow. He would see how quickly the total benefits substantially exceed what can be given through a bureaucratically driven and inefficient UIC program. Perhaps then the member would have a different view of what it means to replace a social assistance program that is not working with one that is logical and defensible.

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I feel constrained to rise because of the comments of the hon. member opposite about this wise and logical social program for Canada that his party is suggesting.

• (1705)

I would suggest to the hon. member that the program the Reform Party seems to be proposing is a program that would work for the rich and not for the underprivileged or for people who just need a leg up in our country. It is a program intended to put more money in the pockets of people like the hon. member, people who have an upper middle class income and is not a program to support the people who need our assistance.

There is another interpretation for the fact that Liberals are voting together on the budget. As Liberals, unlike members of his party, we have the same common goals. We have the same common core set of beliefs and we do agree on this issue.

Mr. Epp: Madam Speaker, I appreciate this question and would like to answer it by asking another question.

A good economic system will benefit all Canadians. If we look at the history of the industrial world going back over the last 150 or 200 years, there have been some very rich people. It is also true when there are some rich people that it generally provides many good jobs and a good livelihood for a lot of people.

What is better, for everybody to be taxed to death and we try to help a few people with handouts, or to allow those with good leadership abilities, good business skills to set up an economic environment in which they could thrive? Maybe they would do fairly well and perhaps the people in the neighbourhood who had been on UI and social welfare and were making \$12,000 a year could now have jobs with the new firm at \$30,000 a year. That happens. If we look at history, that is the way the economy works.