

*Government Orders*

Third, if we can, over the next couple of years, reform the social safety net in a way that does it credit to Canadians, in a way that meets the needs of those who are in need, while at the same time crafting it in a way that is affordable for us as a country with severe financial restraint facing us everywhere we turn.

Nobody in this Chamber, whatever their partisan platform during the election past, whatever their particular political ideology, can be against putting those young people back to work, putting people of all ages into productive labour activity. Nobody can argue with our goal of bringing down the deficit to free up dollars for use elsewhere. Nobody can disagree with what this party has said and stood by for many decades, that there is a group of people out there who have need for social programs through disability, through age, through other circumstance, through no fault of their own particularly, have need for those programs.

There but for the grace of God go I, go you. Again I repeat I am proud to live in a country that has that kind of social safety net for people in those circumstances.

For all of those reasons I hope members of the House would find it in their hearts to support with a heart and a half Bill C-17.

**Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could assist us a little bit in understanding the relationship between these UI changes that are taking place in this bill and the plans that the government has for social security reform.

**Mr. Simmons:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Windsor—St. Clair for her question.

The important thing to keep in mind is that what we are doing here, and I wanted to emphasize this during my remarks, is but a first step, an important and integrated first step.

I take my hat off to my friend the Minister of Finance. If anybody ever came well qualified for this job it has to be him, not only in terms of his paper credentials and his commitment to public life but in terms of the preparation that he did, the leg work he did across the country in the two or three years leading up to the election.

He together with the Prime Minister have such an amazing grasp of the problem, it is no surprise that his first budget and Bill C-17 which flows from it give us the beginnings of a coherent, sensible is the term, approach to addressing some of the problems we face.

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague who is more experienced in the House than I—he has been here at least one term longer—whether he could comment on some of the major points that the

official opposition is making. Yesterday I indicated that in spite of the fact that they had condemned the omnibus bill, they had concentrated almost specifically on unemployment insurance.

• (1325)

At the same time, I wonder if he would be kind enough to give some commentary with respect to the major points that have been made by the Reform Party. I said yesterday, and I repeat it again today, that if Canadians believe some of the reductions that have taken place with regard to unemployment are severe, if the Reform Party had been initiating those they would have been Draconian and dramatic and hurt a great deal.

**Mr. Simmons:** Mr. Speaker, my friend from St. Boniface is at his very best when he decides to put the cat among the pigeons.

He did that so well at one point early in the election. I heard him one morning early as I was driving out to begin my campaign schedule for that particular day. It was just a week into the campaign I recall. I felt so good about what he said that I sent off to him a missile, which I am sure he will remember. I think I guaranteed I will be in his memoirs one day. It is not the first time he has put the cat among the pigeons.

I have never been shy in telling my friends in the Reform Party on what points we disagree and on what points we agree. I wanted to have a moment ago a nice positive sounding speech because I wanted to appeal to the better judgment of people like my friends from Elk Island, Surrey North and Wetaskiwin and so on. I wanted to appeal to their better judgment that whatever the partisan differences here, this bill is a good bill.

Now that my friend has put the cat among the pigeons, now that he has called my bluff as it were, I have to say directly what I said by inference. Those who think that you can put job creation aside until we solve the deficit problem are smoking something different than I am smoking. They are dreaming in Technicolor. You cannot put the country on hold. You cannot say to those people, as the former Prime Minister, the lady from Vancouver Centre at the time, said in the opening gaff of her campaign last October: "We're going to wait until the year 2000 to deal with job creation". You remember that famous statement. We cannot do that.

I say to my friends in the Reform Party and to the Bloc and any people in this party who happen to be of that particular view that we cannot, as a government, as a group of people's representative, say to people: "Put your aspirations on hold, run up your grocery bill for 10 years until we get the deficit under control".

By the same token we cannot say: "Let's have all jobs, jobs, jobs and ignore the deficit". That is why I have said there has to be a balanced approach. Often I hear the simplistic rhetoric that says: "What are you doing about the deficit today?" The answer is: "About the same as we are doing about the job creation today". We are doing it hand in hand. The day you find us doing more about the deficit than job creation, more about the deficit