

specifically repudiated by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) as recently as yesterday, and it is a tactic which debases the quality of our public debate.

Far from seeking to undermine the social safety net, we are trying to make sure that our programs for seniors and families and our other policies to meet social needs, including health care, continue to exist, not just today but for the future.

The third point in today's motion states that the effect of the Budget:

—will fall most severely on Canadians of moderate means while costing the wealthy little.

Quite frankly, I do not understand the point the Opposition is trying to make. It is beyond me how the Opposition can argue that a recovery payment that affects only 4 per cent of seniors with incomes over \$50,000 or 14 per cent of higher income families is coming at the expense of Canadians of moderate means while costing the wealthy little. If the opposition Members had read the details of the Budget they would know that this statement is groundless.

There has been a great deal of comment from the Opposition that the Government is abandoning the concept of universality. I find the horror that this raises in the hearts of the Liberal Opposition intriguing given the comments of their finance critic and of their Party president.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, not I, nor the Minister of Finance nor the Prime Minister but the President of the Liberal Party of Canada, Michel Robert, said that universality was obsolete, according to the newspaper *La Presse* of April 16, 1989, and I quote:

We had a debate on universality, he added, but we did not ask ourselves whether the debate itself was still timely. As I see it, there is no longer a case for universality. We do not have enough resources. Since the need has become far greater among the poorest in Canada, we must consider reallocating our resources to be able to offer genuine assistance to those who need it most.

[English]

It was the Liberal finance critic, not the Minister of Finance on this side, who said:

For my part, I continue to wonder whether family allowances and possibly old age pensions need be universal, especially now that our federal deficits have mounted so markedly—

As the Minister of Finance says, "It's in his book." He is right. I am one of the few Canadians who has actually bought the book. I would advise Canadians, particularly

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Members opposite as they participate in this debate, to take a look at what the official spokesperson for the official Opposition has said.

This is a uniquely Liberal point of view and it is not reflected in the action taken by the Government in the Budget proposal. The Macdonald Royal Commission defined universal programs as:

—those which distribute the same level of gross benefits to all persons with specified traits, irrespective of their incomes. In Canada, all such 'universal' programs define their benefits as taxable income.

By that definition, and all others who have cared to examine the matter closely, universality has not disappeared from Canada. Seniors and families will still receive their monthly cheques, but they will do so without the imposition of a degrading means test. Cashing their cheques will have no stigma attached. Our intention is to make sure that every Canadian has these benefits delivered to him or to her without obstacle and without limitation.

When the Member for Winnipeg gets up and says there is a means test if Canadians are asked to fill out their income tax returns each year, he shows an appalling ignorance of what a means test is. What would he propose when we are filling out our income tax returns? That we do not disclose our income? Since when has the income tax become a means test? It is like *Alice in Wonderland*, with words now being given meanings which they never had before.

Let me conclude in this way. I spoke earlier about the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) the day before yesterday in which he described this House as the place where issues finally must be decided. I agree that that is what Parliament should be and what it is at its best. When the great issues of the day are debated no one should be surprised that there are disagreements and often heated debate.

No individual and no one Party has a monopoly on truth. Debate about the direction in which we should be going is healthy and necessary, but not the sort of debate which we have been seeing over the past week. Canadians who have watched the House of Commons over the past seven days know that something must be done to bring the national debt under control and they know precisely how this Government proposes to do it. They have also heard the Opposition reject every measure which we have put forward to deal with the problem. They have heard Members opposite universally condemn the Government for not doing enough about the national debt, while at the very same time attacking every cut in