

Supply

An election was called and the Tories were trounced completely, and an old age pension Bill was introduced. The Tory Senators still opposed the idea but they felt they had an obligation to let it through.

From the very beginning, Conservative Members of Parliament and Conservative Senators opposed the idea of a pension on principle. We ought not to be surprised today when we hear the Government stating that it is going to begin clawing back pensions. This year it is going to claw back 128,000, and more and more as the years go on.

Canadians will not forget this long list of problems. Underlying the principle of universality is the explicit social contract that public programs and public services will be available to all and that each of us will pay according to our ability to pay. Everyone will receive an old age security cheque, and those who are wealthy will pay more tax; those who are poor will pay no tax. That is not what we have in this country. We have a very goofy system. In our country, not everyone pays tax. Many millionaires do not pay tax at all. It is interesting to look at what upper income people have experienced over the last years of Tory Government.

In 1980, under a liberal Government, the tax rate for the highest income earners was 43 per cent. In other words, a wealthy person would pay 43 per cent income tax. The Liberals dropped that down to 34 per cent. They said the rich were paying too much. In 1987, the Conservatives dropped it to a 29 per cent tax rate. It does not matter whether a person makes \$200,000 or \$200 million, he or she pays 29 per cent. It is absolutely fascinating that under the Conservative Government the top 1 per cent of wage earners, the very rich, have seen their taxes go down during the Tory Government administration, and the very poor and average Canadians have seen their taxes increase by hundreds of dollars.

In closing, with this Government we have had a long history of lies, broken promises, an extended pattern of half-truths. The pensioners of Canada will not forget what the Government has done to them. The families of Canada will not forget what the Government has done to them. One of Canada's most positive aspects of citizenship has now been abandoned, and that is the principle that regardless of who you are and what income you have, you are entitled to an old age security cheque.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On questions or comments, the Hon Member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Nunziata: I would like to ask the Hon. Member who has just spoken to give me his thoughts with respect to the over-all picture, if we put this particular Budget into perspective, given the actions of the Conservative Government since 1984. I wish to ask the Hon. Member to speculate on what Canada might be like in 20 or 30 years time when he and I will be senior citizens and have children and grandchildren.

For example, can the Hon. Member comment on the fact that a few years ago the Government did away with the Foreign Investment Review Agency? In the last Parliament we entered into a Free Trade Agreement with the United States that would literally tear down all economic barriers between Canada and the United States.

As the Hon. Member has put it, with this particular Budget the Government has started to claw back pensions and family allowances so that they are no longer sacred trusts. The Unemployment Insurance Program in Canada has been privatized. Part of Air Canada was privatized in the last Parliament, and we understand the Government intends to fully privatize it. Passenger rail service in Canada may very well become a thing of past.

I ask the Hon. Member to put all these decisions into perspective. Canada is the pride of the world because of these very things. We have a health-care system that is second to none in the world, and an education system that is second to none. What impact will Government policies have on this Canada that is loved throughout the world in terms of our quality of life and in terms of the collective compassion of all Canadians?

It seems to me that given the actions and the agenda of this particular Government, that agenda being one of dismantling Canada as we know it piece by piece, can he speculate on what Canada may be like in 20 or 30 years time?

Mr. Riis: I appreciate the question of my hon. friend. I must say when one projects into the future, particularly the next four years, one becomes very concerned indeed. We do not know what we can trust with the Government.

I respect the Minister who is in his place at the moment and who spoke earlier. He might say today that the Government does not plan to reduce the ceiling on pension clawbacks below \$50,000, or he might say that they do not plan to continue dismantling all the social programs, and he may be correct. However, we have heard so many lies. We have had promises broken so many times that it does not matter what the Prime