

*Borrowing Authority*

**Mr. McDermid:** And they got an answer with which they were satisfied. Why is the Opposition not satisfied with it?

**Ms. Copps:** That is not what they said on *The Journal*.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Ask your back-benchers.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I ask Hon. Members to listen to the Hon. Member's speech.

**Ms. Copps:** He isn't saying anything.

**Mr. McDermid:** Mr. Speaker, I am rather enjoying this. It is like the provincial House. When I worked with the Ontario Government, that same motley crew did the same motley things down there.

**Ms. Copps:** Porkbarrel.

**Mr. McDermid:** They just moved up here, lock, stock and barrel. Here they are hollering again. I am enjoying it. I do not mind at all. I only have a couple of minutes remaining, but I want to say that I am fully prepared to go home and talk with the people of my riding about universality.

● (1500)

I am not at all concerned about those in our society who need help, because they are going to get it. Not only will they be taken care of by this Government, but they will be taken care of better than they are today. That is a commitment of this Government. It was a commitment during the campaign. It is a commitment that we will undertake and carry out over the term of our office. There is no question about that.

I worked very closely with the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) when he was in Government. We spent a lot of time discussing issues we were both concerned with, immigration matters and so forth. It was not brought to the floor of the House—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the Hon. Member, but his 10 minutes have expired.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. We have seen in the last two presentations by members of the Conservative Party why we are having a debate. We have seen the kind of insensitivity and lack of interest in this fundamental social issue that is causing a wide and abiding sense of concern among many Canadians.

They call it a phoney issue. It is a phoney issue when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) inadvertently in his own peculiar fashion admits that they are going to alter substantially and amend the method of payment for older people and families. That is not an issue raised by the Opposition. It was raised by the Minister of Finance. Now we are told it is a phoney issue. I guess the logic of that would be that it is the Minister of Finance who is the phoney. He is the one who raised the issue and put it on the table of this House. It is that kind of consternation which his comment raised which pro-

vided the abiding level of concern we now see among many Canadians.

We also see this in the comments made by the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) who rose to her feet to talk about her constituents in Eglinton who are obviously obsessed, as she is, with the question of reducing the deficit. She refused to deal with the issue of the many senior citizens, students and children in her riding who are also faced with the possibility of losing their benefits. I did not hear a word about that from the Minister. That is why this debate is taking place.

The problem is that this Government will not tell the people of Canada what is going on. This debate was set aside to give the Government an opportunity to clarify what is happening. What do we hear? They talk about fiscal responsibility. That is really the code word. If they start amending the structure of social benefits, we know where the money will go. It will go to feed that strange obsession of fiscal responsibility which the Minister of State has.

For all the protestations of the Prime Minister about how the needy will be helped, we did not hear that from the Minister of State. We heard not one word about the needy in her riding. I happen to know that there are many people in her riding who have needs.

The Minister was not prepared to say, "What a minute, before we cut into existing social programs to help the poor and the needy, we should look at the other forms of revenue the Government may be able to command from the economic envelope or other forms of tax expenditures and re-allocate that to social programs for the needy".

There has been no consideration by any Minister in this Government—the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) or the Minister of State for Finance—to say that if they really want to deal with the problems of those in need, they should find the money elsewhere rather than cutting deeply into the existing social framework of this country. That option has not been presented and put on this table. The problem with this Government is that it is blinded. It has little catchments on its eyes which say it is not interested in social programs.

Let me raise another reason why there is suspicion. It goes back to the incredible verbal gymnastics to which we are treated every Question Period. The Prime Minister stands and says that black is white one day, white is black the other day, up is down, and east is west. He says this with all the sincerity that he can muster, and that is not a great deal. We are supposed to believe him. He gave an interview to *Readers Digest* in August 1983. Let me quote the words of Brian Mulroney. He said:

The only way that universality can be touched will be by an all-party committee of the House. The objectives of social programs should be to get the most money into the hands of the people who need it most and do it efficiently. Are the programs delivering benefits to the people who need them most? That's a legitimate question. But it is so delicate that I would examine it only with all-party agreement.

Where is the all-Party agreement? The Minister of Finance says that he has already made up his mind. He has already