

Supply

saying that whether or not he or she makes enough money in a market economy, when it comes to illness a rich man and a poor woman, when it comes to education a rich child and a poor child, when it comes to pensions, the rich and poor are all entitled as citizens of Canada to the same right to a certain social policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I am the last one to want to disturb the Hon. Member during his speech, but the provisions of Standing Order 81(20) state that during opposition days the speeches are 20 minutes long plus questions and comments. I would hope the Hon. Member would conclude, and then we could have questions and comments.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate just a few minutes to conclude. I see government Members and members of the Opposition agree with that, and I appreciate it.

As I said, this is a matter of great importance to my Party and to the people of Canada. What the Government is doing with pensions is to suggest that no longer will these be regarded as a universal right. It is applying a means test. If the Government says it will start applying a tax-back principle at \$50,000 on pensions this year, next year it could be \$40,000 and then \$30,000. This year it may be the bank president, but next year it could be the school teacher and after that the bank clerk.

Our Party does not believe that this is the right approach. Not only is it bad for pensions to start putting a means test on them, but if the Government moves on pensions today, the same principle could apply to medicare tomorrow. If the Government gets away with means testing on pensions today it will attempt to means test medicare tomorrow, and we in this Party will not tolerate that approach.

I do not want to abuse the generosity of the House which just permitted me some extra time already, therefore I will leave untouched certain other matters.

I will simply conclude by saying there should be no illusion about what is involved in this historic Budget debate. We are dealing with two quite different visions of Canada. One vision is that of the Conservatives who want to take us literally backward while they talk about the future. It is the reduction of a view of life to what could be seen as a sort of great cash register in the sky. I

reject that view of society, as I am convinced most Canadians reject that view. The only difference I see between Margaret Thatcher in this regard and the present Government is that at least Margaret Thatcher is honest about what she is trying to do.

The other vision is that of a social democratic movement that says yes to economic efficiency and market principles in the economic domain but also says that life and society can never be reduced to a set of economic relations, that life has other crucial elements of joy and creativity, and that people must use their democratic government to make sure that equality, liberty and community do not only survive but that they thrive in this Canada of ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard Crosby (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech made by my hon. colleague, the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent). I want him to know that I do not dispute in any way his genuine concern for fairness and equality among Canadians. I am sure he will accord myself and all other Members of the House the same in terms of their genuine concern for social justice in Canada.

I will not quarrel with his remarks about taxing the rich. I realize that he puts it as a matter of principle. However, I think there is great support in this country for the concept that we must temper these rules with common sense. If people who do not require financial support from government are receiving it, we cannot simply regard that as a matter of principle and not attack the reality of the situation. Again, I think he will realize that there are legitimate concerns on both sides.

• (1150)

I want to pick up on a remark that the Member from Oshawa made on interest rates in this country because that is a genuine concern to all Canadians, particularly to Members of this House of Commons. I want to remind him, as I am sure he is well aware, that in the early 1980s when interest rates soared to 19 per cent and 20 per cent more on residential mortgage, that wreaked havoc across the country and it literally destroyed families in their search for a better future. I am sure none of us want that to happen again. The problem is though, how do we prevent that, from occurring again?