

One will notice that the average family income after tax in 1991 was an estimated \$42,612, which was down 2.6 per cent from 1990 after adjusting for inflation as measured by changes in the consumer price index. Real income after tax declined in the early 1980s, followed by a steady but modest growth between 1983–89.

The two years of decline in 1990–91 left after-tax income a full 4.3 per cent lower than in 1980. If one goes through the statistics more carefully one will notice that the range is amazing. If one forms part of an elderly family then one's rates can be as low as \$30,000 compared to the average of \$42,000. For female lone parent families it is \$19,000. For elderly males or females living alone it is \$19,000.

I have a very important question for my colleague about the importance of income tax. The point I would like to make and the question I would like to ask the member is this. In support of what he thinks about income tax is it not about time that the government addresses the impact of income taxes on family income?

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. The way to motivate people in terms of productivity today is through fairness. The only instrument that the national government has to touch everyone in this country is the tax act of Canada.

The current tax act is biased against the middle income earner. In other words, we can see the situation in this House where some people's incomes are over a million dollars and they are paying absolutely no tax. This is while a tax law is passed—we on this side of the House voted against it but the government brought in closure on it a couple of weeks ago—where family trusts in the billions of dollars have not been touched for 21 years.

Even though this was a Liberal initiative 21 years ago this government rammed it through for an indefinite period of time. When that kind of unfairness in the tax system is out there it affects people's spirits and it affects their attitudes in terms of the work place. When one multiplies that right across the country it has a devastating effect on productivity, profitability and everything else.

I believe passionately that if we are going to really address the notion of fairness then we are going to have to strip our tax system right down and go right back to basics. It is only when we have a transparent system where everyone is in the loop that we will once again

have a tax system that is fair to families and ultimately fair to everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being 1 p.m., I do now leave the chair until 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(2).

The House took recess at 1.01 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

POVERTY

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Ottawa Food Bank's annual spring food drive accumulated over 8,200 bags of food for further distribution to the needy in the national capital region.

At the same time the Tory chair of the subcommittee on poverty suggested that people use food banks not because of need but for frivolous and selfish reasons. In the U.S. another legislator continues to send out a different message. Congressman Tony Hall, chairman of the select committee on hunger, endured a 23-day fast to protest the abolition of his committee.

It is not surprising that some politicians would like to close food banks. They are a constant and visible reminder of the existence of millions of Canadians who are jobless and dependent on charity and public assistance for their basic needs, a fact that makes all of us uncomfortable and conscious of the failure of traditional economic policies.

I prefer to stand with Tony Hall who strives to give voice to those who would otherwise not be heard thereby obliging policy makers to confront the reality of hunger at home as well as elsewhere.

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[Translation]

PEACEKEEPERS

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, following the incidents involving members of the Canadian forces in Somalia, General Gordon Reay, commander of the mobile force, blamed politicians and the media for passing judgment on the Canadian peacekeepers before the facts were known.