

Oral Questions

Mr. Mulroney: With regard to the McMillan Binch newsletter, I never accused the right hon. gentleman of writing it. The question is, did he charge for it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

AMOUNT OF PENSIONS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that I will stand up to this particular exchange when the senior citizens of the country manage to see it and hear it. I am asking the Prime Minister whether the pensioners, and those who will qualify shortly for a pension, will receive the same statutory equal pension that they now receive. Is that going to be a part of government policy? Is there going to be any discrimination between citizens when they reach retirement age?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have responded once, but let me do it again. The response to the question put by my right hon. friend is yes, all senior citizens will deserve the pensions to which they are entitled notwithstanding the profligacy of the previous Government which placed the public finances of Canada in jeopardy.

[Translation]

PRINCIPLE OF UNIVERSALITY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

This morning, in an interview on the CBC French network at quarter past eight, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance mentioned that the Minister had said: We no longer have the resources. He is disavowing the basic principle of universality by setting new limits. We must review universality, starting with its basic definition which should be universality of care and social services for those who need it. They are challenging universality and the criteria established by the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, could the Right Hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for LaSalle, was speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Government, the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Health and Welfare, when he clearly gave Quebecers the impression that the principle of universality had been set aside by the Minister of Finance?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I am delighted to hear that a Bay Street lawyer listens to the CBC French network at eight o'clock in the morning. That is good news.

The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister have said, and I think to the satisfaction of my hon. friend, that the programs and principles governing those programs are and will be fully effective. What we are trying to do is engage in

civilized dialogue and debate with Hon. Members to find out whether we cannot make a better use of the public funds at our disposal, for the benefit of those members of our society who are truly in need. That is what we are trying to do.

[English]

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, when will we get the clear truth from the Prime Minister? When will the Prime Minister stop covering the debate with his usual thick layer of verbal fudge, as Richard Gwyn said in his column yesterday? When a person is blamed by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, when will we get a clear statement so that Canadian families who make more than \$26,000 will know that their programs will not be cut, as suggested by his Minister over the weekend?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important, if my hon. friend is going to be fair and objective in his analysis, that he defer at least for a while to his spokesman on health and welfare, who is quoted in *La Presse* of November 20, 1984—

An Hon. Member: That is not the question.

Mr. Mulroney: Indeed it is the question—as saying the following:

[Translation]

If the Government wishes to remove universality of pensions in order to give the money to senior citizens who need it most, I agree with that.

That is what he said, and I am merely saying that we do not want there to be any doubt about the principle of universality. We want to provide benefits for those members of our society who need them most, regardless of the positions taken by the Liberal Party.

[English]

Ms. Coppins: Slick, slick, slick.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps Hon. Members would like to remember who we are and where we are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent).

Mr. Broadbent: And we should all remember to tell the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

UNIVERSALITY PRINCIPLE

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): The Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions that he regards the universality