

Government Orders

Canada which form the major part of the social safety net underlying poverty in our country.

The social safety net, since its creation, has never been more needed than it is now after eight years of Tory government. The social safety net has never been more threatened than it is now after these eight years of Conservative government.

To say that this measure is justified by the deficit will make my voters recall the campaign promises that this government made in 1984. In 1984, when it was first elected, it was largely on the basis of promising to eliminate a deficit created by successive Liberal governments which stood then, if I remember correctly, at \$174 billion.

The Conservatives were elected because it was said that the Liberals did not care as much about the deficit as they did, and they would do something about it.

How many years have elapsed under their government: six, seven or nearly eight years? Far from reducing the deficit, they have seen it more than double. Now, as if it were not the first time, they are saying that it is time to take on the problem of the deficit.

Their credibility has worn rather thin. Anything that they feel should be done now to bring down the deficit could have been done much more easily, much less painfully with much more public support in 1984 when Canadians were ready to believe that they were going to decrease the deficit.

In 1984 the Liberal deficit which the government could have decreased at that time, if it feels it is capable of doing it now, would have been more than twice as easy to eliminate than the deficit now. Not only was the amount less than half, but we were in a boom period when the social safety net was not being looked to by nearly as many of my fellow Torontonians or by our fellow Canadians who are looking to it now.

• (1650)

Now there are far more people who need the social safety net. Now there is far more of a deficit to deal with. This is a deficit which has been created by seven, nearly eight years of Conservative government.

People do not believe at this point that this government is capable of reducing the deficit and they do not

believe that this government intends to reduce the deficit.

The parliamentary secretary looked across and said: "All of us have to make our contribution to doing it". In the very same budget that introduced this very harsh measure, as I understand it—and I hope the parliamentary secretary or a member from the government party will stand up and correct me if I am wrong—the government did not give a break to the corporate welfare bums identified by the New Democratic Party. I think it is shooting at the wrong target when it talks about corporations. The government actually deferred the existing tax law for the taxation of capital gains passing through successions of wealthy families.

How much did that measure take away from its plan or commitment to reduce the deficit? How much could it have spared for the social safety measure if it had not introduced on a gratuitous basis another plan to make it easier for the rich to get along without paying taxes, not corporations as the last speaker for the NDP put it? Corporations have a role to play. The taxes that they pay have to be competitive with the taxes that are paid by corporations in other countries.

Why the payment of capital gains tax by individuals should have been deferred in the very budget that weakened and threatened and undermined the social safety net is something that I would like to see a member from the government party stand up and defend.

I understand that most members of the Conservative Party did not even know that this very budget that was undermining the social safety net in a manner that I intend to elaborate on for a few minutes was extending and increasing tax benefits to the wealthiest sector, the wealthiest group in Canadian society.

I have nothing against the rich in Canadian society. That is for sure. I certainly feel that a budget, which is administering harsh medicine to provinces and harsh medicine to poor families in Canada, should not at the same time have opened a new loophole for deferring capital gains tax to the wealthy.

One of the ways this government gets away with measures like this is that they are complicated and they are hard to report. I think it is worth taking a few moments to elaborate on some of the background of the benefits of the Canada Assistance Plan.