

*Government Orders*

many other policies, we might have seen a change of heart by the Liberal party.

We remember that it was the Liberal party, for example, that was responsible for the testing of cruise missiles in Canada. Somewhere along the way they changed their position on that. I had hoped that perhaps on the question of tax reform they might have had a change of heart as well. But no, they still remain the captives of the corporate elite in this country. I challenge the Liberal members in this House to stand up and defend tax reform which gives more to a person making \$86,000 a year than it does to a person who is living below the poverty line. Is that really Tory and Liberal tax reform?

I want to ask my colleague from Surrey North if he might just elaborate on the whole question of equity in the tax system. In fact, we are talking about \$350 million of income that we are forgoing. There are merchant seamen who served this country with distinction during World War II who have been denied a fair pension plan. The Speaker is aware of this as are members in this House. If we have \$350 million to deal with a fairer taxation system, why do we not finally start treating our merchant seamen with some dignity and some respect? Why do we not start treating our railway pensioners with some dignity and some respect and bring in a much fairer system of pensions for railway workers?

I commend the member for Surrey North for bringing to the attention of the House, and through the House all Canadians, the silence of the Liberal party with respect to this tax reform and their complicity with the Conservative party. Also, I would ask the hon. member if he would elaborate on his views with respect to equity in the pension system in this country and on what he might do, and what we as New Democrats would do for a fairer pension system that would benefit those who are struggling below the poverty line today.

• (1750)

**Mr. Karpoff:** The question of equity is a major one. The vehicle we should be looking to is not tax loopholes through RRSPs but the whole issue of the adequacy of our two basic pension programs; the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security. What we should be doing is

increasing those, not bringing in such nonsense things as clawbacks. We should be increasing the universal portion and broadening the base on which Canadians can contribute to the Canada Pension Plan, increasing the benefits under the Canada Pension Plan for employees and employers to contribute. We have to find mechanisms by which people who are not in the conventional workforce are able to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan.

Equity is a major issue which is developing in this country, not only in terms of adequacy of pensions, but in terms of taxation. Repeatedly we see the government bring in programs that reverse the equity of taxation.

**Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate and I want to comment on the remarks of the member from Burnaby. Some people are very short-sighted in this world. Short-sightedness seems to come in different things. Often people listen to others before they comment on what they have said or what they are going to say. It would do the member for Burnaby good to listen rather than to speak about what the Liberal policy or position is.

When I look at Bill C-52 I find that there are many areas of it that raise concerns among my colleagues. When I look at goals of pension reform plans I have to think about what the object is. When we look at pension reform we have to look at a program that would bring dignity and comfort to those in their senior years in any country and any civilization. That really has to be the ultimate of where we are heading with this reform or any pension reform.

The government has the challenge to provide legislation which will be fair, which will provide an equitable situation for all Canadians and which will treat all Canadians equally. I believe that to be a very important part of the challenge the government must put forth in legislation.

The pension plan today needs reform. There is no question that there are many difficulties that many senior citizens are experiencing. The National Council on Welfare has stated that 600,000 senior citizens today in Canada live below the poverty line. Many senior citizens live many thousands of dollars below the poverty line. We not only have 600,000 below the poverty line, we