

*Senior Citizens' Day*

pension benefits every week or that I could do something about the economy so that his son could get a job.

**An Hon. Member:** He wants both.

**Mr. Hudon:** He wants both, of course I realize that. But I am sure you know which of the two he is willing to give up. He will choose indexation, a way to share wealth which is so automatic that it allows the Government no alternative whatsoever. You made exactly the same speech in 1980.

What I mean to say, Mr. Speaker, is that indexation and universality are two completely different things. The FQDR people think so too. First of all, they said: We wish to congratulate you for your frankness. I said so publicly. That I told members of a great many senior citizen's clubs and it was widely reported in the media.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think I have to be aggressive about this. I said strictly this: Indexation and universality are two completely different things and mixing them up is a mistake.

● (1820)

[English]

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with a sense of real sadness. I truly find it mind-boggling that Members across the way chose a time like today, on the eve of very solemn and important family celebrations, to put forward what is essentially the most ridiculous suggestion I have heard in a long time. Members across the way cannot say and do what they have been saying and doing over the last year and expect anyone to believe they truly want a day to celebrate the role senior citizens have played in our society. I said yesterday that this place gets curiouser and curiouser. I was quoting Lewis Carroll and Tweedledee. Believe me, I hit the nail on the head.

Stop and think about just who are our senior citizens. They are the people who, over the course of the building of this country, made many sacrifices so we could have what we have today. They built this nation from the roots up. They sacrificed. Then I have to listen to my colleague across the floor say that they should now sacrifice themselves once again in the interests of their children. I do not think that the youth of this country expect our senior citizens to tighten their belts because we as a whole have not found the answers to some of the problems in our society. That is not the way to go about it.

Senior citizens are perfectly able to express their concerns for themselves. They are able to say to the Government: "We have some very serious problems. Don't cut our income because we live close to the poverty line already". People have to live on 25 per cent of what they had been living on before they turned 65. The Government may not believe this but there are people who did not have enough income to buy a private pension plan or they may not have worked in a business where private pensions were available. These people are entitled to a continuity of lifestyle but we have not, in our review of pensions in our society, found a way to enable those people

to have that continuity of lifestyle. Having a day to celebrate the fact that they have lived this long is no way to celebrate.

We need concrete proposals by seniors for seniors. These people did not lose their marbles the day they hit 65. They are intelligent, competent, capable and educated. Whether they have a university degree or not is of no consequence. Ask them about social issues. Ask them about their housing, transportation, and medical health service problem. Ask them about what they need. Stop treating them like children and speaking for them. What right have you or I to speak for older people? Our obligation as elected Members of this House is to go out and consult.

This Conservative Government came into office on a great big wave promising open Government, the Government will consult, it will be open to society and reflect social concerns and needs. I have not seen this Government consult with anyone. I have been witness to and even participated in consultations which are so strict and rigid that you do not have time to listen. I sat in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. We heard from one group after another who had plenty to say about deindexation and the changes required in the OAS and pension system. The Government, misleading as usual, indicated it would not touch the system because it was fine for now. It then proceeded to touch the whole system.

Our lack of attention to the needs of older people to maintain their jobs, to have access to education and retraining means we do not give credit where credit is due. We do not allow them the kind of facilities they require. However, did we talk to them? Did we review our job programs with them? Or, have we left them out? If we do consider them—

[Translation]

—for a few twenty-week jobs and then goodbye.

[English]

I would like to come back to what my colleague from Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) said. If it had not been for Madame Denis, who said "Bye, bye, Charlie Brown", I wonder what would have happened. The senior citizens, including Madame Denis, do owe the Conservatives one major vote of thanks. By indexing OAS pensions, the Government mobilized Canada's grey power. Never will this country be the same as a result of those inept, inconsiderable, indeed unconscionable actions. These people have been organized and they will certainly let the Government know what they think. They will no longer allow themselves to be ignored in the political process. They have become a powerful lobby and the grey heads of this country will have to be listened to.

I suggest that the Government not throw them a sop, or whatever Members opposite think it is, in the form of a one-day festival. The Government can be sure that we will appreciate that nevertheless because it will be a great day to remember the foolhardy measures taken by that Government affecting the people who built this nation. I suggest it would be a great day every year to talk about the broken promises. We can talk about the Government that wanted to cut back the