

*Supply*

cheque is not pocket change. It is bread and butter, roof and board and home, be it their own home, an apartment or a senior citizen's cottage.

We live in a terribly sheltered ivory tower here in Ottawa. We spend our time talking about senior citizens at "Wonderful Wednesdays" in the corridors of so-called power. We wonder what effect this latest uproar will have on the next Gallup poll. We wonder if, how, and when the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) will back away from this latest political blunder. It is thinking about senior citizens in terms of Gallup polls and measuring them in terms of what is politically possible or politically impossible that has brought the House and the country to the point where every recognized social, business, and government agency in the land is demanding that the Government of Canada withdraw now from this policy. It is telling seniors that they will live with the uncertainty of a decision which the Government will make six months or a year from now.

● (1115)

Senior citizens are not just numbers to be manipulated at election time and sold out when the first Budget is brought down. They are not the stereotype group of people who spend their time between cards, bingo and handicrafts, slowly slipping into a second childhood. They are a large group of 2.5 million people. The common denominator they share is that they are over 65 years of age. But in reality, that is where the stereotyping should end. They are 2.5 million individuals—as individual as any age group in society. If they are to be described as a group in any way, shape or form, let us recognize that our seniors, if anything, can be characterized by their tolerance, their wisdom—that wisdom that only comes from having lived and enjoyed almost all of life's experience—and their selfless nature. They are the least demanding of any among us.

The Liberal Party says, as our motion demands, that full indexation for Old Age Security must be restored immediately. In trying to defend this heartless measure, the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) have told us about the genuine concern that senior citizens have for their children and grandchildren. They say that the senior citizens to whom they have talked support this measure and are 100 per cent behind the Government because they are concerned about their children and grandchildren. There is some truth to that statement because senior citizens are concerned about their children and grandchildren. They built this country for future generations. But to extrapolate from that the notion that they can afford to pay now and that they should be asked to pay the burden and the price of providing a \$125,000 capital gains gift to those who are most wealthy among us is absolutely ridiculous.

What do the children and grandchildren say about this? Do they accept the proposition of the Minister of Finance that either seniors take a cut in their old age pension or live with less security so that the Old Age Security is turned into old age insecurity, or else youth will not get a job creation

program? Do they accept that either/or proposition: either the youth or the seniors receive some assistance, but not both? No, they do not.

The Prime Minister has told us that anybody who stands and challenges this Draconian budget measure is trying to incite class warfare. It is class warfare when the Government tells the people of Canada that it must choose between casting young people out without hope for a job or denying senior citizens the dignity of retirement in their later years.

What do young people say? Do they enjoy being made the scapegoats for a brutal government decision? Yesterday, the Ontario Federation of Students held their annual meeting at the University of Guelph. Much to their credit, they passed a motion calling upon the Conservative Government to "restore full payments to seniors". That is what I expected of them. I never had any doubt. Those young people, who have been told by the Government that it is either they or senior citizens so they had better get on side and support the Government, said that the Prime Minister does not speak for students when he says deindexing will help create jobs for youth and benefit youth. "We are the youth, but we are also the grandchildren of these pensioners". They said, "A lot of them do not have an alternative income besides their pension, which means that it will put our grandparents and our parents below the poverty line".

That is what the young people of Canada have said to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

● (1120)

The Government said it consulted everybody before the Budget was brought down. The Government said that it has talked to people and reached a consensus. Joyce King of the United Senior Citizens Federation of Ontario tells us there was no consultation with senior citizens. If anything, the opposite, a commitment that their pensions would not be touched. A sacred promise was given during last summer's election campaign.

**Mr. Nunziata:** It was a lie.

**Mr. Tobin:** There was no commitment, Mr. Speaker, no commitment. The Atlantic Liberal caucus travelled to Atlantic Canada last week. We met with senior citizens' groups in each of the four Atlantic Provinces. Not one group felt it had been consulted. Every group felt it had been deceived. Each group made up its mind that it was going to stand and fight, not fight the good fight, not fight for the sake of making a statement, not fight for the sake of expressing an opinion or of putting themselves on the record, but to fight and win.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Rossi:** And they are going to win.

**Mr. Tobin:** They have won, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council on National Issues, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Organization of Small Business, the Canadian