

Supply

Where is the concern for Canada's future when they propose that we simply continue on the same ruinous course year after year without ever reviewing what consequences that will have for Canada? Where is the fairness when they say, go ahead, continue to spend, allow that debt burden to grow, allow an ever-increasing share of the national Budget to be going just for the interest charges on the national debt, to the point where it threatens the very existence of the social programs which they claim to support?

• (1050)

Where is the compassion, the fairness and the concern for Canada when that is the policy that it follows? Where is the honesty that Canadians have a right to expect from Members on all sides of the House?

Mr. Wappel: How many deceptions did you carry out on Canadians?

Mr. Beatty: It is not enough to talk about the national debt. It is time for Canadians in this House of Commons, on both sides, to be honest about what, if anything, they would do about it. Canadians are more sophisticated than Members opposite give them credit for. Canadians understand that you cannot simply attack every measure to reduce that debt burden, and at the same time get up, as all of them have done, to say day after day in the House of Commons that the debt be increased, and also at the same time get up, as all of them have done, to say that not enough is being done about the national debt.

Canadians are simply smarter than that. They will not be conned.

When the Opposition suggests that targeting programs to those people who need them the most will cause Canadians to withdraw their support from social programs, they put forward a view of Canadians as mean-spirited and unconcerned about the people who are most in need. It is a view that is both false and unfair to ordinary Canadians. Anyone who knows the history of this country, any of us who represent Canadians in this House of Commons, must surely by now recognize the fact that if there is one characteristic that runs throughout Canadian history it is that of generosity on the part of Canadians and a concern for people who are most in need. A suggestion by Members opposite who claim to be concerned about the poor or claim to be concerned

about the elderly, that giving most assistance to those people most in need will somehow cause Canadians to be mean-spirited, is a distortion of the facts and it is unfair to every Canadian.

I invite Canadians who are watching this debate on television or watching from the galleries as well as members of the press to watch what is done by Members opposite over the course of today. What is the position being taken by members of the Opposition? Their position is that we should be paying equal benefits and that equal benefits should be obtained by those people who are wealthiest in our society. The Party that once spoke for ordinary Canadians, that once professed to be concerned about the people most in need, the New Democratic Party, now speaks for the wealthy. New Democrats are saying their concern is that benefits will be taxed back from those who can most afford to pay.

In a recent poll, which I have in my hand here, some 63 per cent of respondents supported the Government's move to tax back family allowances and old age security at a higher rate from the income of high income recipients. That is a margin of two to one in support of the Government's proposals.

Ms. Hunter: How much did the poll cost?

Mr. Beatty: Are these people mean-spirited? Is there something they don't know that members of the Opposition do know? Is there something that is represented in this view that is cruel or unconcerned for the poor wealthy people who will have their benefits taxed back?

The second part of the motion we are debating here today says that the Budget will make easier further incursions against old age security pensions and family allowances, as well as other social programs, including medicare. I hear in this motion disturbing echoes of last year's campaign to frighten the elderly, the sick and the poor by false claims that their well-being would be affected if the Free Trade Agreement were implemented.

Today the argument is different, but the goal of the Opposition is the same, to create fear among the people least able to defend themselves. Any claim that asking wealthier Canadians to carry a larger share of the tax burden paves the way for an attack on medicare is both false and deeply unfair to the sick and to the elderly. It is an invention by the Opposition. It is a claim that was