tional papers on family allowances and pensions are released in January, those papers will be relegated to the appropriate standing committees of the House of Commons so that Members from all Parties can hear the viewpoints of average income Canadians?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend makes an excellent point. We very much want to listen to Canadians and consult with important groups in our society, from the provinces to the groups representing the poor. We very much want to listen to Members of Parliament.

● (1125)

I would be happy to sit down with my hon. friend and work out a formula whereby all Members of Parliament will be absolutely certain they have had complete and full input. We do not view this in any partisan sense.

The social programs of the country are there to be respected and enhanced where possible in the interest of the greatest number of citizens. We do not view this in a partisan spirit. We view it as an on-going obligation that we have to maintain, with the help and support of all Members of Parliament.

MEANS TEST—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, normally I would have saved this for the end of the day, but since there are enough Members to speak at this point in time I would join the Leader of the Government, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Official Opposition, in wishing to everyone, on behalf of my colleagues and my Leader, a very merry Christmas and a new year filled with promise, a new year filled with hard work, and for everyone in the country some degree of assurance that they have a future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: With regard to the Prime Minister's responses this morning, he has indicated that he does not favour a means test. Would he acknowledge that a tax-back provision which would be directed specifically at old age pension or family allowance is in fact a means test?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is an abstract, hypothetical question. I have already said that we are not going to have means tests, not yesterday, not today, and not tomorrow. I hope that satisfies my hon. friend.

Mr. Deans: I must be honest; it does not quite satisfy me, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dick: What would?

POSSIBILITY OF TAX MEASURES

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask him to consider for a moment that the Minister of Finance has indicated that the option of a tax-back applied directly to social programs, old age pensions, and family allowances, is one of the options being considered. I ask the Prime Minister again: would he recognize that if there were a tax specifically designed to collect back from those that portion of their income which was directly attributable to old age pension, or to family allowance, that that in fact would be intended to reflect a cut-off point, or a way of getting back certain income based on the income of the individuals, and that that in effect would be a means test?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Member begins his question by saying "if there were a tax". It is a completely hypothetical question, and the Government is under no obligation to respond to this kind of question. I am surprised the Hon. Member raises it, inasmuch as the Member for Vancouver East has specifically come out and stipulated the NDP policy in that—

Ms. Mitchell: That is not true. I did not say that.

Mr. Mulroney: —where there is a proposed tax-back all the way through the system that could, in circumstances, have the effect of seriously undermining the concept of universality. We are very much in favour of maintaining the principle of universality in our society in trying to find ways of getting more money into the hands of the poor and those who need it most. I would hope my hon. friend will agree with that.

Mr. Deans: I can think of nothing I would rather see happen than to guarantee that the poor receive more money so they can live at a decent level.

CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): My final supplementary question is also for the Prime Minister. If it is true that he has rejected a specific tax on specific programs, such as old age pension or family allowance, why then does the Minister of Finance continue to offer that that is one of the options under consideration, that that is one of the options that will be placed before the public of Canada and the House of Commons, and that that is in fact still under active consideration by the Government?

● (1130)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend begins again by saying: "If it is true".

Mr. Deans: It is true.

Mr. Mulroney: What we are saying I think is pretty clear-cut and, I hope my hon. friend would agree, is also reasonable. At an appropriate time very soon, consultation documents will be brought forward and will be given to all Members of