

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, permit me to commend the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) for caring about the senior citizens in his constituency and for expressing a sense of justice and fairness. I commend him because he is standing up for his constituents. That cannot be said for Hon. Members opposite who are refusing to stand up and speak for the many constituents in their ridings who are telling them that what the Government is doing is unfair.

It seems that what is at issue is the integrity, honesty and credibility of the Government and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in particular. The Prime Minister and the Government promised senior citizens that they would ensure full indexation of their pensions. The senior citizens of the country were promised that any money saved as a result of a social benefit program being touched would not be used to reduce the deficit, but that is precisely what is being done by the Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order. The period for questions and comments has expired. Resuming debate.

● (1730)

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to stand in support of this motion today. I certainly hope all Members in conscience will look at it individually from the point of view of their constituents. Regardless of what Party they support, I hope they will support a reversal of policy that would be helpful to seniors rather than harmful. We know that the Budget calls for the deindexing of the universal OAS—

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): No.

Ms. Mitchell:—by CPI minus 3 per cent. How about that?

Some Hon. Members: Right.

Ms. Mitchell: This same deindexation of 3 per cent will be applied to the income tax spouse's allowance for widows and widowers aged 60 to 65. Senior citizens, and the poorest of seniors are elderly women, have been singled out in the Conservative Budget for particularly unfair measures. The Conservatives' fervour to control the deficit and their aversion to taxing the wealthy has led the Conservatives to target senior citizens for cut-backs in a Budget that they were trying to sell originally as tough but fair.

As we have asked many times in this House, is it fair to take \$1.6 billion from seniors while giving \$1.5 billion to those who no longer will have a tax on capital gains and roughly \$2 billion to the oil companies? Is this fair? I think most Canadians by now know very well it is not because the message has got out over the past week that this is not a fair move and something must be done to change it. We are appealing to the Government today to change.

Partial deindexation of the OAS actually, in our opinion, is underhanded and sneaky. Even worse, it is dishonest. During the campaign, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) promised that a Progressive Conservative Government once more would

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index the old age pension. I agree with the Conservatives that the Liberals did impose a form of deindexation in the six and five program. The Prime Minister said the Conservatives would restore the OAS once more to the actual cost of living on a quarterly basis. We know they have not done this. The Prime Minister should be very concerned. People have lost faith in the kind of promises he has made and then not kept.

More recently, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) and the Government in its Blue Paper to discuss elderly and child benefits stated that in the Government's view no change was required in the OAS-GIS payment system. The Government went on to make a change in that system, no matter how the Minister seems to try to distort this. I cannot understand why he does not see for the GIS group, the poorest of the elderly people in Canada, the majority of whom are women, that he is taking away from their old age pension as well. The Government certainly did not keep its word. We know the effects of this Budget will be both immediate when the Government brings in the 3 per cent deindexation and in the long term.

I heard a Member of the Government back-bench say in a rather sarcastic term "Oh, \$100. Isn't that too bad?" I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the House that I have talked to a number of senior citizens in my riding and in other meetings that I have attended that even a loss of \$100 is a great hardship to many seniors. In Vancouver, bus fares have gone up recently. Many elderly people will not be able to get around the city as they used to. Phone bills have gone up and many seniors have had to have their phones removed. Hydro and rents are up. Many seniors who happen to own their own homes are in desperate straits because they cannot get RRP funds to improve them and they will have to move out.

Federal sales tax hits seniors particularly hard. In British Columbia no longer can seniors get non prescription drugs on their Pharmacare cards. Every time they go to the drug store, seniors will be hit with extra taxes. Many seniors have pets. Many pensioners who do not have families have pets. They will now be taxed on pet food and they will have to get rid of their pets. Why should senior citizens not be able to have a glass of wine? That is completely out of the question now. Senior citizens in Vancouver have told me that their pension just covers food, rent and second-hand clothing. They have had to give up newspapers, telephones and they will never be able to afford new clothes. They cannot even afford now to get on the bus and visit friends and relatives.

The one positive thing about this whole Budget is that it has aroused such anger in senior citizens as well as other Canadians. They are organizing and there is no way they will take this, no way at all, Mr. Speaker. I know Government Members must be receiving just as many protests as we are, saying that seniors will not take this and will be demanding the reindexation of pensions.

I would like to refer particularly to the Council of Senior Citizen Organizations of British Columbia. I talked with a number of their officers. They refer to the organization as COSCO. They sent a telegram to the Prime Minister three or