

Government Orders

savings which may result from program changes will not be applied to reduction of the deficit”.

That is exactly what the government has proffered as the reason for this movement. “We can reduce the deficit with these \$300 million that we will realize”. One can read all through this consultation paper and see that the whole thing has been scrapped. Once again, Canadians will become cynical and say: “Why consult us, because you will not listen anyway? You have betrayed seniors. You have betrayed young families across this country. You have betrayed all Canadians in the country”.

This country is fragmented, fractured into winners and losers. Acrimony has never been at a higher level. We are becoming leaner and meaner. We are emulating our American neighbours. We are harmonizing not only our laws but our social programs. We are going to become less caring for one another. We are overrun with the big devouring the little. We see our national dreams fading.

The sad part of it is that it is part of an over-all agenda. I think a lot of members do not understand that there is an agenda in place because they do not feel that they are active participants. By their passiveness they are participating in the end of Canada as we know it.

The spectre of free trade hangs over our heads on each and every day. Even members of our party and I sometimes say: “Well, let’s not mention it because they will bring out the old sparrow routine”. Every sparrow that falls will be blamed on free trade. I am suggesting we are not talking about sparrows, although I am sure the government could care less about sparrows. This is about people.

The suggestion was that if I were to vote for free trade the jobs in my community would be preserved. The biggest employer said that as part of the over-all agenda. They got the free trade and they are being laid off with great regularity.

The Americans talk about free trade and protectionism. They said: “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you”. That is what they told me when a group of us went to Washington. “You people keep quiet in Canada. You have got all you are going to get from us”.

With respect to social programs there is no secret. We have to harmonize, they suggest, but the better word is compromise. This government is compromising us to our knees, be it in terms of UI, GST or universality. It is part of a much larger agenda. If any of the members really cared, they would have accepted just one of those amendments that we proposed yesterday, the one that would tie the \$50,000 threshold to inflation, but they totally ignored that.

The reality of what they are after here is to get their foot in the front door. Just give them a little leverage and they will continue to attack social programs. They did not dare make it a frontal attack because they would not get away with it. It is an around about approach.

I want to wrap up so as to allow my colleague from Windsor to finish up. The opposition to this bill is growing by leaps and bounds each and every day. It is most unfortunate that probably much of the opposition will not be recognized or heard.

As far as the level of threshold, the Minister of Finance says that it will be reviewed periodically and adjusted as appropriate. We do not believe that for a moment. It will not be monitored. It will not be adjusted. If it is monitored and adjusted the same way the free trade agreement is monitored and adjusted, we do not want it. It is not a monitoring process at all.

I will end by again reading from the government’s consultative book with a chronology of social programs and in particular old age security programs. It is a glowing report starting in 1927 with the introduction of the old age Pensions Act which provided for cost sharing with the provinces of a means tested pension for residents of Canada 70 years old or over. It was improved in 1948, 1951, 1966, 1967, 1971 and 1972. The improvements continued in 1978, 1979, 1985 and 1989. That is where it ends.

This has not been written in the book yet but I think the epitaph should be written and will be written. It will state: “1989: The day universality in this country was removed by the Conservative government”.

• (1740)

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, we are coming to the end of a debate that has been all too short, in view of the way the government has intended to make