

### Oral Questions

The Minister quite rightly points out that this measure affecting people whose net personal income is between \$50,000 and \$75,000 a year will be phased in over three years. It seems to me, as the *Toronto Star* said this morning, that universality is not at all affected. The *Toronto Star* said so in an editorial. So it is a progressive measure that will help this year: the less fortunate will get more, the rich will pay more, and it is quite normal to give more to the poor and less to the rich.

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

**Mr. Malépart:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's statement is false, and this is one more instance in which Canadians have been deceived, because there is no transfer of wealth to poor families. And don't forget that senior citizens who earn \$50,000 or \$60,000 are the people who built this country and who made it possible for Brian Mulroney to be wealthy today. Those are the people you are going after.

Respect for the elderly doesn't mean—

**Mr. Speaker:** Your question, please.

#### IMPACT OF BUDGET ON THE SICK

**Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Laurier—Sainte-Marie):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Minister of Finance. Why has the Minister decided to use his Budget to go after the sick across Canada by making cuts in the health insurance program? Why do the sick have to suffer?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, in the general programs to which the Hon. Member referred, not only will there be no cutbacks, there will be \$25 billion more at the federal level that will be transferred to the provinces.

As for the question about pensions, that measure will affect about 4 per cent of 3 million senior citizens who are drawing old age security benefits; fewer than 2 per cent will be subject to full recovery; about 14 per cent of 3.8 million recipients of family allowance cheques will be affected by this measure; fewer than 10 per cent will have to pay back the full amount.

What we are doing constitutes a progressive initiative. We are taking more from the rich to give more to the poor. That is a social policy which the Hon. Member has always defended.

• (1130)

[English]

### SOCIAL PROGRAMS

#### UNIVERSALITY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The national associations representing the poor people of Canada attacked the Government's Budget yesterday.

A few years ago the Prime Minister said the following about the universality principle in social programs: "Our position is simple and straightforward. We are in favour of universality of social programs and it shall not be touched". That was said by the Prime Minister a few years ago.

The Government has now introduced a Budget that removes not simply a few thousand people but hundreds of thousands away from the universality principle affecting family allowances, affecting pensions, and destroying the social policies as a right of citizenship in this country. Why has the Prime Minister reneged on this fundamental commitment? Why is he taking what can only be described as a revolutionary approach to Canada's social policy tradition in this Budget?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have heard it all. Here is a Government determined to have more resources to give to the poor and the disadvantaged and those who need it by taking it from those who can afford it most, and this is being opposed by the Leader of the socialist Party.

On this important issue this morning, *The Toronto Star*, no friend of the Government, stated, in regard to Mr. Wilson:

While he maintains the all-important principle of universality, Wilson proposes to tax back these benefits from those most able to afford it. While that acceptable measure only affects 14 per cent of family allowance recipients—

—and so on. The *Star* says it is an "acceptable" measure.

We think it is a socially positive measure.

Because my friend raised the subject of agencies dealing with the poor, I refer him to a recent statement made by the National Council on Welfare: "The advantage of the claw-back is that it saves money not by tampering with the principle of universality, but rather by increasing the progressivity of social programs. Most defenders of universality believe that benefits should be distributed in a progressive fashion—. The claw-back does no damage to universality—old age pensions and