

*Oral Questions***SOCIAL SECURITY**

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, although I was going to ask the Prime Minister to lead the House in a rendition of *Solidarity Forever* after his last comment.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: We shall overcome.

Mr. Deans: No! Please, no!

Mr. Robinson: My question concerns a promise made by the Minister in January of this year that no change would be made to the Old Age Security or Guaranteed Income Supplement payment system, and that the Government was not proposing changes "at this time" in the elderly benefits system. What was it that changed from January when the Minister knew full well the debt position of the Government which resulted in its decision to place the full load for debt reduction on the backs of those least able to pay for it, the senior citizens?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, again the Hon. Member is using words which are not adequate. He used the words "full load". That is not the case. He is taking a specific part of the Budget and saying that represents the full load. I say to him, as I have said to his Leader, that, if he looks at it, the system has not been changed. Universality is in place.

Mr. Broadbent: He did not say universality; he said no change, period.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): He used the word "system" in his question. I say to him that the people who were eligible for an old age pension before the Budget are eligible for that same pension after the Budget, and that is the issue.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the issue is why on earth Canada's senior citizens should have to pay for debt reduction when the wealthy are enabled to invest in condominiums in Florida and get a greater return on their capital gain. That is not fair. It is tough, but it certainly is not fair.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, the Minister's discussion paper made no reference to universality. He said there would be no change.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Robinson: Why is he changing the system now?

● (1500)

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. If he looks at the three principles right on the front of that discussion paper, he will

see "universality will be maintained". That is one of the three principles on which the whole paper is based. He can refer back to that.

He says that only the senior citizens are asked to carry the cost of the debt. I repeat, as I have done in other Question Periods, and today, that there is a surcharge on those who are recipients of a higher than average income. There is the minimum tax that will come into effect January 1, 1986. As well, it was necessary to turn the country around from the direction in which it was going, namely, that the deficit was going to grow, and grow, and grow, and take more, and more, and more from our social programs. That is untenable. It cannot be sustained, and that is why the changes were announced in the Budget.

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PENITENTIARIES

RENOUS—CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL HANDLING UNIT PROJECT

Mr. W. R. Bud Jardine (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. It was recently announced that construction of a special handling unit at the Atlantic Institution at Renous was to be cancelled. What impact will this have on local employment? Can the Minister give his assurance that this decision will not affect future staffing at the penitentiary?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the special handling unit at the Atlantic Institution will not be constructed. Careful projections indicate that we have a surplus of these facilities now, and will have a surplus of space for some years. I sympathize with the Hon. Member's concern about the effect that this will have. However, I want to assure him that the preponderance of the jobs involved in this Institution, which are heavily weighted in favour of local employment, will not be affected.

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CLERK OF PETITIONS' REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the petitions presented by Hon. Members on Friday, June 7, 1985 meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED DAMAGING AND INCORRECT REMARKS

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I gave you notice this morning of a question of privilege which involves comments made in the House a week ago today on Monday, June 3, when I was not present in the House. It is a most serious