

We had more of the same when the present Minister of Transport held the Employment and Immigration portfolio. He decided that people who lost their jobs no longer qualified for unemployment insurance benefits, yet these people were getting what was coming to them, as employees they had paid their share of pension contributions as had their employer, but again the Conservative Members kept saying not to worry. After arguing with them for 17 months the Government finally admitted they were right and had to pay unemployment benefits back to 47,000 claimants who were entitled to that money.

Today still the Government practices discrimination. People are told: If you pay your premiums then lose your job and seek other employment you are entitled to unemployment insurance regardless of your income.

Right now a rich man who gets \$350 from his RRSP or from a tenant is entitled to full unemployment insurance benefits, but not so the ordinary worker who withdraws \$200 from the pension plan to which both he and his employer contribute. Who would have thought a Government would come into office and do something like that! At one time or another some people may have said it was nothing to worry about. We see the same thing coming today. They begin at the \$50,000 bracket, nothing to be concerned about, they are going after people earning in excess of \$50,000, Mr. Speaker, but it is just a question of time before the ceiling drops down to \$40,000.

Already the table is not indexed. Automatically, by income levels, this will come down, and the next target will be \$30 000. And then, quite simply, the kind of Minister of Finance we have today will say: Look now, we already established the means test for the guaranteed income supplement or the child tax credit. So we might just as well extend that means test to everything else and so eliminate those whose income tops \$15 000 or \$20 000. Certainly someone will say: You mail a cheque, and the money spent on mailing old pension cheques we might as well save that rather than claiming it back at the end of the year!

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I urge some Conservative Members to do as they did on other struggles I led. The Hon. Member for Abitibi was not afraid to rise in support of senior citizens and face his Government. I hope that some will rise, speak to the Minister of Finance and tell him not to touch the health care system. Everyone here has constituents who suffer, who are ill or

Supply

who will be. We must defend those people who cannot come here on Parliament Hill to speak for themselves. This is what we are elected for.

Mr. Speaker, rather than have this charade of social program dismantling, the Government should have said: "We honestly want to improve social programs" and look after to the people who are most in need, and established a guaranteed yearly income program. But not this charade of attacking and destroying piece by piece the vital universal social programs. The people paid for them, not the Prime Minister.

Mr. Della Noce: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Duvernay (Mr. Della Noce) on a point of order.

Mr. Della Noce: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was anxious to hear the Hon. Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) whom I respect greatly conclude his remarks since I did not want to interrupt him on a point of order. But I was a little surprised to hear him try and defend people with \$50,000 plus income—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is not a point of order. Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Lotbinière (Mr. Tremblay).

Mr. Tremblay (Lotbinière): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must admit that the Hon. Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) speaks with more authority about senior citizens than about the Space Agency. And of course there is the emotional side with his references to the sick and to his own health, and we are of course aware of that situation. My comment was, and I made it when the microphone was still closed, that at last he was waking up. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear his comments because he was himself a Government Member from 1975 to 1984.

Does he realize what kind of legacy his Party left us in 1984? Mr. Speaker, perhaps I may give a short summary. During the previous 110 years, in other words, since Confederation, successive Governments had accumulated a total debt that was less than \$20 billion by 1967, when we celebrated our centennial. About 3 cents of every dollar paid in taxes went to service the debt. In 10 years, Mr. Speaker, from 1975 to 1984, when the Hon. Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie sat in this House, the debt soared to about \$200 billion. Did the Hon. Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie rise in the House at that time, Mr. Speaker? Did he rise in the House when the Energy Ministers of the time closed as many as three