

Government Orders

a creation that we really know what to do with. There is no doubt that we are at cross-minds as to what do we support and what do we not support.

This time the Senate has made it quite easy for us through its amendments. The member for Kingston and the Islands said that they were not severe, that they were almost innocuous amendments. He said he wished they would have gone further. We, too, wish they would have gone further because it proves beyond a doubt that the New Democrats are the only party which stands for universality of social programs. The Senate has played its hand. Should this bill pass, God forbid, the Conservatives will end the notion of universality. The Liberals will be accomplices. The Senate will be partners with the Conservative government.

I am surprised that the member for Kingston and the Islands said: "We expected they would go further". I am told that they had a strategy meeting between the Liberal MPs and the Senate and they said: "What exactly are we going to do"? We now know what they did. They said: "Let's come through with some innocuous, not-too-severe amendments", knowing full well that the government would not accept them anyway. They should have played hardball with their friends and said: "Look, we are going to kill this bill". That is the least they should have done.

Poor Mr. Knowles, it is his eighty-second birthday. It took him 25 years to bring pension reform to this country and now, in 1990, the government is taking it back. The Minister of State for Finance has introduced a new term. It is called flexibility. The flexibility now is that you have a longer arm so that what you put into one pocket, you can take out of the other. I think that that is the only way that we can discuss what flexibility really is.

We had difficulty in our party trying to define what universality is because the government members never spoke of universality. I have heard the Minister of State for Finance speak three or four times. He very seldom talks about what is universality. I took the opportunity to go to the thesaurus, and the word "universality" means cosmic, global, infinite, pervasive, usual. Obviously what you give with one hand and take back with another is not universal.

The Liberals have defied the definition of "universality" as well by some of the amendments. They have pretended to defend this universality. I should turn to what the Liberals have said in this House to remind them of what they have said.

The hon. member for Halifax said: "A clawback is a clawback," and we agreed. With the amendments it is still a clawback.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North said: "I call on the government to exercise a conscience to withdraw this bill in the interests of all Canadians, in the interests of Canadian families, and in the interests of Canadian seniors." He should have called upon the Senate to do the same.

My good friend, the hon. member for Ottawa South, said: "There is only one solution for this bill and that is to remove the discriminatory tax." Remove it, the clawback tax; we agree whole-heartedly.

What did the senators say? Senator Kirby said: "I have become a little disturbed by the way a number of organizations are using universality as an emotional code word. I am not in favour of the clawback, but I am troubled by the argument that is used. As much as I dislike the clawback, I have difficulty with the argument that clawback is destroying universality." Also the Liberal senators cannot define "universality".

What the term means is very clear. It is very clear that Bill C-28 takes away the concept of universality for this country, one that we have enjoyed for so long and one that people have worked so hard to get. We are now repealing that right.

In this party we believe that it is a right of every Canadian. This is reverting to the means test: You don't deserve this because you have this much income. We believe that that is a demeaning exercise for any Canadian despite what that person may have as income.

One senator was responding to the statement of Jean Woodsworth of *One Voice* that as Canadians we should be ashamed of the clawback. We agree.

The Senate committee chairman says: "The government says it needs money. What it is doing in Bill C-28 is raising nearly \$500 million through the old age security clawback and family allowances when the program is fully operative." That is a lot of money. It is half a billion dollars. For the most part, it is coming off the backs of senior citizens, which is part of the problem. We agree