

Government Orders

party and that the Liberal party will be voting against this motion and against this bill when it comes up.

We are certainly watching with great interest to see how the Liberal party will vote when it comes time to do so. When everything has been said and done and all their rhetoric has been given, it is how we vote that really indicates where we stand on this issue.

The other point I want to make is that the hon. member did not respond to my third question. It was with respect to his position on the need for a universal public pension system as the basis of the pension system in this country, as opposed to the privatization of the pension system. If he would care to, I would certainly like to hear his comments on that topic as well.

Mr. Pickard: I really appreciate standing up and answering the member from Regina, Mr. Speaker. I found it fairly significant that the member stumbled over this tongue several times as he was talking about fairness and unfairness. Maybe part of what he was saying was not quite accurate.

• (1820)

If you recall the legislation and look carefully at it you will see that a tax credit system was suggested in 1984. That was a clear point that I brought forth today and that you said was not. That was the 1984 position.

As we look at the programs, we see that there are times when things look very prosperous from one perspective. However, what I pointed out were very clearly examples of direct unfairness in the program. I feel they are there. I am not saying the legislation in 1984 was perfect, but it was not the same legislation that is being brought forth today.

I do not know that you can ask me to comment on the 1984 legislation and today's legislation and compare the two. That is not the point that we have here. The point is what is fair, and I mentioned the tax credit system in my words. 1984 brought that forward. I see no inconsistencies in what is being said today.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in this House and make my first speech of this decade. In this context I just want to explain the political context in which I am doing that. This bill, Bill C-52, which amends certain provisions of the Income Tax Act governing tax assistance for retire-

ment savings, sounds quite innocuous. But we must look at it in the whole political context.

For instance, in December, on the last sitting day of the House, we saw the clawback of old age pensions. We saw the clawback of family allowance. This suddenly takes on a more sinister appearance. That is what I want to address my comments to this evening. I think all of us in this House have to look at the long view of where this government is going. What may seem to be somewhat innocuous on first reading is in fact a very complex bill. So you have to be very firm minded even to attempt to read through the bill. That it is the political context.

I think it is quite stomach-churning to think of the hypocrisy of clawing back old age security, a measure which we passed in this House on December 22 in the name of deficit reduction while increasing tax deductible contributions to RRSPs. This will be done at a cost of \$300 million to \$350 million of taxpayers' dollars. It is clear the hypocrisy is quite enormous. It confirms the view of the clawback as a device to eliminate universality and not simply as a mechanism to reduce the deficit.

This bill cannot be seen in isolation. It is all part of the plan. As my colleague for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt pointed out, the minister who is shepherding this bill through the House is not the finance minister. Nor is he the Minister of National Revenue. No, he is the minister responsible for privatization. That kind of gives you a little clue as to the intent of this bill.

What we in the New Democratic Party are doing, and I think increasingly so, is demonstrating that we are the real opposition. Not only are we opposed to this government's legislation, which is our duty as an opposition party, but we also have the alternatives. I think that that is clear on this first day in this new decade. We are on our feet in the House demonstrating again that not only can we oppose this government, we can propose alternatives.

The alternatives proposed are not new. They are ones that are consistent with our principles. Unlike the Liberal party, we do have principles by which we live. That is how we distinguish it. The Liberal party has a very interesting persona. It is a chameleon-like persona. When members of that party are on this side of the House they become very progressive. They take on our hues because of their proximity to us. However, I think this bill demonstrates, because of its similarity to the Liberal bill which was introduced in 1984, the same intent. That is to say, it makes sure that the big spenders and the big income earners get protection so that they