

Government Orders

What concerns me most of all—and I wish to give others an opportunity to speak—about this bill is the essential dishonesty that underlies it: dishonesty in presenting a change in social policy, the most important in a generation in the context of an income tax bill where it cannot be debated or discussed as it should be; dishonesty because it represents a complete turnaround by a government that went forward in the election campaign and promised not to touch social programs.

The Prime Minister stood on an election platform and asked in the company of his mother whether anyone would believe that he would cut benefits to her. The Prime Minister stood up in one of the hardest hit areas of our country in Nova Scotia and said that as long as he is Prime Minister benefits for the elderly would not be reduced but would be improved. The essential dishonesty has to cause revulsion in Canadians across the country, and it has to cause them to think of all of us. Who can we believe when the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance can glibly make promises like that and within a few short months of being re-elected turn their backs on them and tear them up? Who can we believe?

This is a sad day for Canada. This is the day that universality ends.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1730)

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I promised my colleague from the Liberal party some time at the end. I was hoping that the time allotment would be shared somewhat more equally, but I guess those are the breaks of the political scene.

I should comment on the amendments at first, the 125 that my colleague has mentioned. I have good reason to believe after some searching that there are consequential amendments included in these government amendments to the bill which indicate indeed that the bill is flawed with the amendments and without the amendments.

The government should have done the honourable thing and brought back the bill in the new year with the appropriate amendments. They are consequential. There is something really unusual going on behind the scenes with these amendments. As has been indicated to

me, there is something rotten in the state of Denmark. This is unprecedented. I cannot find any precedents for this kind of action having taken place. It is indeed sad. There is something seriously wrong within the system. Perhaps it will be addressed once again in the new year.

This is the final discussion on clawback, Bill C-28, the end of universality, a concept of caring, something with which our country identifies, a watershed of social policy. The government has changed the watershed. Social policy has been swept away. It is a sad day for Canada. This is a debate that has focused on clawback, seniors, family allowances, and \$50,000 thresholds.

Every once in a while when I am looking for enjoyable reading I turn to one of my books written by the hon. Prime Minister before he was Prime Minister. I understand that that is a big mistake. Never write a book until you are finished your political career; never before. I quote the Prime Minister:

When I look at Canada today, there is nothing I see that is more painful to me, as a citizen of one of the most blessed nations on earth, than the continual fighting and bitching that is going on among and between just about every major group in our society.

I will skip a few lines:

It is a continuous fight card in which it is difficult to find winners and easy to identify the loser—Canada itself. It seems the phrase “the common good” has been struck from our vocabulary.

That is what universality is all about. The common good has been struck. How prophetic the Prime Minister was. He was ahead of his time.

He has been the author of the end of universality and this will breed cynicism among Canadians. I received a call not two hours ago from a constituent saying: “I just do not believe this. I don’t think we want to participate any more in the system simply because if we are going to contribute and not receive, why participate?” We have been saying this all along. Canadians will begin to become very cynical and say: “If we cannot participate in the end, then why participate during the process?”

As to the consultative process of the government and the committee, it is well-known now. It has been well documented. There was consultation beforehand, but not consultation during the process at first and second readings, report stage and third reading. I will not repeat what my hon. colleague said, but I would like to read from the consultation paper dated January 1985, specifically the third point found at page 6 which states: “Any