

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have been advised that the U.S. Coast Guard has indeed confirmed that a defueled reactor from a submarine was shipped via the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Columbia River which was entirely within U.S. waters together with a U.S. naval escort and a U.S. Coast Guard safety officer on board the towing vessel. I repeat that this was entirely within U.S. waters and it was a defueled reactor.

CALL FOR CANCELLATION OF REACTOR SHIPMENTS

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, in fact, those were the same kinds of assurances we got during the shipment of the *Exxon Valdez*. We are well aware of the fact that it is within U.S. waters, but nuclear reactor accidents know no boundaries. It is the responsibility of this Government to protect the fishing industry off the West Coast and to protect the people of Victoria who have the right to feel safe.

Once again, given the close relationship between this administration and that of Washington, and given that the Prime Minister himself is in Washington today presumably to do something about the environment, will he ask the President of the United States to cancel the barge shipment which will occur on Monday and which is the first of up to 100 barges that the U.S. Navy potentially plans to ship over the next 25 years?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Hon. Member is more interested in spreading fear—

Ms. Copps: I'm more knowledgeable about it than you are.

Mr. Mazankowski: If you're more knowledgeable than I am, then you don't need an answer.

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• (1430)

THE BUDGET

CLAW-BACK PENSION PROVISIONS

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): The Minister of Finance must acknowledge that he has not fully indexed the claw-back provisions in his Budget for old age pensions. That means that every year, because of inflation, more and more people will be caught. Will the Minister admit that while only 4 per cent of pension

recipients will be caught today, in 20 years the figure will be 25 per cent, one in four older Canadians?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in the Budget papers themselves, we say that this matter will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. In 1985, we introduced a modified indexation into the tax system. This is consistent with that indexation process. We said at that time that we would review the impact of the deindexation on an ongoing basis. In tax reform which was implemented last year, we adjusted the low income threshold so that it was raised quite significantly as a result of tax reform three years after the measure was brought in. So we are reviewing these, and we are acting when it is appropriate.

EFFECT ON INCREASING NUMBER OF CANADIANS

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): If we are talking about a vague review, how do we as Canadians know which way you are going to review it? The claw-back that is being proposed is like quicksand which more and more elderly Canadians are about to sink into. My question is: is it acceptable to the Minister that in 20 years, one in four Canadians will be caught in that quicksand?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to that is no, it is not acceptable.

QUERY RESPECTING TAXATION OF MEDICARE

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): The Government is attempting to tax back 100 per cent of pension benefit for some Canadians today. Why should not Canadians be afraid that you will not apply the same principles to medicare in your next Budget, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member and her Leader keep trying to apply this principle to medicare. I do not know what they have in mind, or what sort of fear tactics they are trying to apply. If this is part of NDP policy, let them come out with it. But it certainly is not part of Progressive Conservative government policy.

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TRANSPORT

VIA RAIL SUBSIDY CUTS

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, cut-backs in subsidy support spell the end for VIA. The appointment of Ron Lawless as the president of VIA is a clear signal that VIA services will be drastically cut.