

*Oral Questions*

sionate society which they built, will the Prime Minister reconsider?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the reason this particular measure was not implemented on budget night was because of our apprehension in regard to the possible impact. That strikes me as being legitimate. We wanted to monitor the situation as closely as possible so as to minimize whatever effects there were on the elderly.

It is our view, and I hope it is shared, that the way to sustain sound social programs is through an economic recovery. That economic recovery appears to be in train. That is good news for Canada, and most of all it is good news for the integrity of the social security programs.

## CONSULTATION INQUIRY

**Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I am sure the Minister knows that heads of 11 major organizations, representing one million pensioners, met in Toronto yesterday to protest partial deindexation of pensions. They are mad and militant. They are demanding that pensions be reindexed.

Will the Minister explain why there was no consultation with seniors' organizations, when there was consultation on every other front? Why was there no consultation with seniors before the Government changed its policy and decided to deindex pensions? The Minister knows that deindexation will affect 2.5 million pensioners and will push another 200,000 pensioners into poverty.

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the Hon. Member said that consultations took place—

**Ms. Mitchell:** There were no consultations.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** I listened to her, and I would appreciate the same courtesy. She said that there had been consultations with various groups. She said that there had not been consultations with senior citizens' groups. But there was consultation with various groups, and I say to her—

**Ms. Mitchell:** Not regarding pensions.

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** I would say to her what the Prime Minister has been saying today in Question Period. That is why those words were in the Budget. Those words were there the day the Budget was brought down. The Government then looked at the situation very carefully. The Prime Minister and I have said today that, as the economy improves, the matter will be monitored. That has been the commitment, and we will stand by that commitment.

## REQUEST THAT MINISTER ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF SENIOR CITIZENS

**Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that there was no consultation with seniors at the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, but that there was consultation regarding child benefits. Why is he trying to deceive people?

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** Withdraw.

**Mr. Speaker:** I must ask the Hon. Member to withdraw that suggestion and proceed to her question.

**Ms. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, in the interest of getting on with the question, I will withdraw. But I think it is abominable the way that the Minister has been treating—

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. Mitchell:** Will the Minister read the seven-point brief which was presented yesterday by those groups, if he has not already done so? Will he consult with them personally? He can do that today. Most important, will he, at the Tory caucus meeting this weekend, become their advocate? Will he speak for a change on behalf of pensioners, and take their position to that caucus?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I am the spokesman for pensioners in the caucus and in the House. I am also the spokesman for the spouse's allowance, the widow's allowance, the widower's allowance and disability—

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Epp (Provencher):** I could go back to the report on *The Journal* when she and I appeared together. She said that she would be willing to tax senior citizens more. Why has she changed? We have not changed.

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## THE BUDGET

ARTICLE IN *WALL STREET JOURNAL*

**Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the influential newspaper, *The Wall Street Journal*, in a four-column article asked: "Will Canada cut its economic throat?" In commenting on the Budget, the article began: "Canada is about to commit economic suicide in the interest of economic theory".

How can the Minister of Finance expect to keep the economy growing and reduce the deficit when his avalanche of taxes will erode more and more the buying power of Canadians? Does the Minister of Finance believe that he can tax the economy back to prosperity?