

Borrowing Authority

\$50,000 or more. We know the \$50,000 cut off point won't last very long. This Government has no consideration for the elderly who built this country. Today, it may be \$50,000; tomorrow, it will be \$40,000 and then \$30,000. Finally, no Canadian will have any assurance of having a decent old age. In any case, the purchasing power of \$50,000 will decrease every year as a result of inflation. They did not tell Canadians the truth!

[English]

In the Budget last week the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance put an end to the universality of the old age pension and the family allowance. So much for the sacred trust. The principle of universality meant that every Canadian was treated equally. That principle lent credibility to our social programs. We were not dividing the country into those who deserve and those who had to be treated with charity. It was not charity. It was a right of citizenship. It was a right that every Canadian believed inherent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Once the principle of universality is abandoned then it is at a government's discretion who is going to be treated on the dole with the charitable largesse that a government decides to distribute from time to time. Using that principle of universality, this country built up one of the most advanced pension systems in the world. We built up one of the most advanced systems of family care, one of the best medicare systems on the globe. Universality means there is no difference in treatment according to your income; you get the same doctors, nurses, hospitals and care. But that principle is not compatible with the Tory right wing agenda.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Neither is federal funding for unemployment insurance. What did the Government say about unemployment insurance during the campaign? We have already taken this up before Your Honour in Question Period. On October 13, before a large assembly of Conservatives at the Hotel Newfoundland in St. John's, the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) said this: "The federal Government has no plans to make changes to the Unemployment Insurance Program. It is complete nonsense to suggest otherwise". That was on October 13.

• (1520)

When asked by reporters if he had checked this with the Prime Minister—they know him well in St. John's—this is what the Minister said: "You're damn right I asked him about it and he said no, no one is planning any changes in the Unemployment Insurance Program".

To put it bluntly, either the Prime Minister did not tell the truth to the Minister for International Trade or the Minister for International Trade did not tell the truth to Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): With this Budget there will be no more money for unemployment insurance. The Prime Minister and his Government are taking nearly two billion more dollars away from unemployed Canadians—all this on top of what the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mrs. McDougall) did a week or so before. Worse, they are privatizing a public system that has been protecting Canadians for 40 years as a result of a constitutional amendment—the best system in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I shuddered when they started to privatize the infrastructure that holds the country together. I refer to Air Canada, the abandonment of VIA Rail and the Post Office. However, I never thought any Canadian Government would privatize one of the most fundamental features of social insurance and the social security net of the country, never—and this Government has done it.

What the Government is doing is shifting people off unemployment insurance and on to welfare. It is taking money away from the unemployed to put into training programs. We in this Party have been advocating more training and retraining programs for years. We need more of them. However, we always assumed in our arguments that the money would be forthcoming from the general revenues of the country, or from the business community with governmental assistance, but after four and a half years of slashing training and retraining programs the Government now claims to have discovered that training is not more important and has placed it on the backs of the unemployed. The money should have come from general revenues. It is an astonishing betrayal of public trust. Once again, as we build up this indictment in the House of Commons where it should be built up, it did not tell Canadians the truth.