

Government Orders

their family allowances subject to clawback, but in 10 years this will rise to nearly 30 per cent.

This is not a small attack on universality but a major attack on universality, one which will affect so many Canadians. What is clear here is that average Canadians are losing the benefits of social programs, losing the benefit of programs that made us distinct from the United States. More and more of our social programs will become poorer, they will become more targeted, and they will be available only to those in need. The only effective way to ensure that our social programs and taxation are fair is to ensure the continued universality of social programs coupled with a progressive taxation system.

As we know, the Conservative government has chosen to do the opposite, has chosen to make our taxation system less fair and has chosen to make our social programs less and less adequate to meet the greater needs that Canadians are facing. Canadians do not believe this government when it says that these measures are fair. They do not believe this government when it says these measures do not attack universality. They do not trust this government when it speaks on social programs.

It poses a number of important questions with regard to the system of the government's priorities, a number of important questions about fairness in Canada. For example, why should an individual be entitled to receive \$100,00 in capital gains tax free but another individual lose \$4,000 he or she gets in old age security simply because it is paid as a universal social benefit?

• (1550)

Family allowances and old age security are already taxed in Canada. Why should a special tax be levied on children and the elderly? If the intention is to raise money from the rich, why not do it through a more progressive tax system instead of a super tax on children and on the elderly?

And to ask a more general question with regard to the whole process, when was it that Canadians voted for a means test being applied to the family allowance and old age security? When was it that the Government of Canada asked for Canadians' advice on that matter? It was not an issue in the 1988 election. It has never been

an issue which has been presented to Canadians and yet the government is going ahead anyway.

What the government is doing is constantly increasing the tax burden on ordinary families and reducing the tax burden on the richest of Canadians and larger corporations and at the same time programs that make us distinct from the United States, those programs to which the government committed itself prior to the last federal election.

The choices this government has taken would not be taken by any government which is committed to fairness and to supporting Canadian families, Canadian children and Canadian senior citizens.

It is not the only course the government could have taken. Many opportunities have been presented for the government to change its mind. Many alternative approaches have been suggested but, so far, to no avail.

It is worth remembering that senior citizens did turn the government back in its first term when it made its first attack on senior citizens' old age security. Those senior citizens are making their presence felt once again as we have indicated.

In closing, the government needs to reassess its priorities. There is no doubt about that. Anybody who spends any time going across this country will hear that from almost everyone. It needs to listen to what people are saying and it needs to respond to what people are saying. It needs to stop doing the opposite of what people are asking it to do and do what is good for Canada. Madam Speaker, it needs to put people first.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Madam Speaker, I take pleasure in being able to speak in this House today on Bill C-28. As you know, the title of Bill C-28 is quite lengthy. I will simply refer to it as an act to amend the Income Tax Act and the Old Age Security Act.

Given my time restraints and not to diminish the importance of the other acts and their amendments included in Bill C-28, I will confine my remarks to clause 48 of this bill.

As we know, this clause concerns a clawback proposal on old age security and family allowance benefits. I believe this is of great importance to a number of