

Supply

Women 50 years old or over are the poorest population group in Canada today, and one woman out of three in Canada is 50 years old or over. Figure it out for yourself.

She went on to say, and I quote:

There are now a million and a half female pensioners in Canada. Fifteen years from now, there will be at least two million. Old age is a woman's world.

The majority of us live alone, because our husbands often predeceased us, and we are poor. More than 70 per cent of widows, divorcees and single women are now living below the poverty line. The majority of us survive our husbands. This means that nearly 25 per cent of us are on our own when we reach retirement age. What happens to our financial security? When our spouse dies, we have no income. And not all women have husbands that are protected by a private pension plan. Only 39 per cent of workers today contribute to such plans. After a life spent raising children and keeping house, we have no decent level of security, and even in the best of circumstances, the wife will never get more than 60 per cent of the pension her husband was receiving—

Mr. Speaker, as you see these figures are most alarming, and they describe the circumstances in which the vast majority of the elderly in Canada are living, and in spite of these figures and facts the Progressive Conservative Government knows all too well, it is attacking one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. The de-indexation of pensions will perpetuate inequality among Canadians in the most regressive way by making our needy elderly even poorer. Mr. Speaker, it is an injustice and it is appalling but it is the truth!

[English]

We realized from the very beginning, from the very moment the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) sat down after delivering his budget address, just how unfair is the Budget. We realized just how clear is the double standard according to this Party that is now governing Canada. The double standard is pervasive throughout the Budget.

Very quickly, what is in the Budget for the rich? Surely all members of all Parties of this House ought to be approaching a Budget from the point of view of fairness, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister of Finance said so often before the Budget came down. They told us to look for fairness. Well, we looked for fairness, and what did we find? We found for the rich a \$500,000 life-time tax exempt capital gains provision. We found no minimum tax introduced this year. We found a surtax for the rich, yes, but payable on federal tax payable. Getting through the jargon, that means that if the rich hire the right chartered accountants and do not end up having any taxes payable, they do not even have to pay the surtax. We found all kinds of advantages that clearly exist for the wealthy of the country and for the corporations.

The Prime Minister cited the change that has been made in the taxation system for banks. A slight new tax has been added to the banks in Canada. There have been some additional increases in corporate taxes in other sectors, but when we look through the smoke and mirrors of the Budget to the net effect of tax proposals on the corporate sector, we find that by 1990, while individual Canadians will be paying more than \$4 billion in additional taxes, the corporate sector will actually be paying \$2 billion less in taxes rather than more. That, to us in the New Democratic Party, is not fair, Mr. Speaker. The rich individuals receive some benefits, the corporations receive

additional benefits, but the ordinary Canadian, what does he or she receive? Five hundred dollars in tax increases on everything from a gallon of gasoline—which, of course, will not come in until September 1, Canadians will feel it then—to pet food.

● (1150)

The purpose, surely, Mr. Speaker, of democratic politics ought to be for us in the legislative process to use our political power not to intensify inequalities in society but to change those inequalities. That ought to be the task for all of us who are elected. We should think day in and day out about how we can overcome inequality and unfairness in order to build a Canada which is more just for all. This Budget does exactly the opposite. I will just take two single items which ought to stand out in everyone's consciousness: first, the changes in the RRSPs, which is overwhelmingly used by those who earn more than \$50,000 a year, and, second, the benefit which is given in the capital gains provision. Only 4 per cent or so of Canadians will benefit from that hand-out, the richest 4 per cent. The Government is giving to the rich \$1.5 billion with those two provisions alone. And what does this Government take out of the pockets of pensioners? It takes \$1.6 billion. The Government takes \$1.6 billion away from pensioners and gives \$1.5 billion to upper-income Canadians.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, the principle is clear to the Tories that they are giving most to those who have the least need and taking the most away from those who have the greatest need. That sort of sums up the Tory vision of justice. As I said the other day, this Budget takes from the needy in order to give to the greedy.

Canadians ought to rise up in anger, as they are doing in increasing numbers all across our land. The Government, however, does not want to say openly what it is doing. It does not want to admit that there is a net transfer of wealth going on through this Budget from average and low-income Canadians to the wealthy. It does not want to admit that it is unfair, so it offers all kinds of excuses. We have heard them ever since budget night. First, we were told—believe it or not, Mr. Speaker—that pensioners actually supported it. All Hon. Members will recall that. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, all rose and said, "The pensioners want to do this. They want to do their bit to bring down the deficit". That lasted for about 12 hours, I think, until they abandoned that line, seeing themselves how ridiculous it was. Then they shifted to another kind of argument, one well known to the Prime Minister, they said they had no option. The Prime Minister said that everyone had to pay his or her share and the pensioners were out there so they had to pay their share as well.

But we gave the Government some options. My colleagues and I have spent the last ten days in the House of Commons proposing one option after another. We said that perhaps a minimum tax should have been introduced. That is not too heretical. Most countries in the world already have a minimum