

matters to which all Canadians have voiced concern and opposition.

I want to urge the government to show some appropriate concern for families and seniors in Canada. We should be supporting families, we should be supporting Canada's future. Families have a contribution to make to Canada's future and we should be supporting them in that role. We should also be supporting Canada's seniors who have made their contribution to Canadian society and need to be able to live with respect and dignity for the rest of their lives.

We should look not to end the universality of social programs, ensure that those who are better able to pay their taxes do in fact pay their fair share.

So we should be supporting families, we should be supporting seniors, and we should be supporting the regions of Canada. We should resist changes which make our social programs more like those in the United States.

The route that the government is following in Bill C-28 with regard to the clawback of family allowances is, of course, not the only route to follow. It is not the only way it could resolve some of the questions that it raised about the deficit and about the cost of social programs.

As has been so often pointed out by those in my party and by thousands of Canadians across the country, there is a great deal of opposition to the measures that the government is proposing, and yet the government is going ahead anyway. No consultation with groups who are to be affected prior to these measures being announced took place. Of course, this has been a touchstone of this government. Why would it want to consult, I suppose, with those who are affected if they are going to be opposed to the government's measures.

But it is critical to our approach to government in Canada that we do hear from both sides of the issue, that we do not just hear, as this government does, from the large corporations and the right wing think-tanks. Even this form of government consultation is breaking down with the Fraser Institute speaking out now against the goods and services tax. Even the government's allies, and supporters, are prepared to oppose the general thrust of this government's policy.

Government Orders

Let us begin with what the government committed itself to in terms of social programs. All of us will remember statements by the government about its commitment to social programs. Of course, after the election the government is prepared to go back on its word. We all remember what the Prime Minister said in Summerside, Prince Edward Island in October of 1988. "As long as I am Prime Minister of Canada, social benefits, especially those for the elderly will be improved, not diminished by our government which is committed to social justice and fairness for Canadians".

In response to reminders of this and in response to criticisms of the approach, the Minister of Finance has argued that the clawback on social programs, on family allowances and old age security will have only a minimal effect on Canadians, that it will not affect Canadian individuals and families very much. He claims that only 4.3 per cent of seniors will be paying back all or part of their old age security, with 54,000 paying back all of it, and 74,000 paying back some of it.

On family allowances, the Minister of Finance claims only 14 per cent of families will be affected. But these numbers will go up rapidly year by year, primarily because the government has not indexed these numbers. More and more retirees will end up repaying their pensions and more and more families will end up repaying all or part of their family allowances.

For example, a 28 year old person earning about \$28,000, roughly an average industrial wage, will be hit by the clawback by the time he or she retires. That means most Canadians are going to be hit by this as time goes on.

So we are faced with cuts to social programs, contrary to commitments made by this government. Some in the government and some on the government side are more honest and, of course, it comes as no surprise that I would raise the comments of the chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance who has been quite explicit about the attack on the universality which these programs generate.

I think we have seen in this debate a clear recognition that these steps that the government is taking move our programs more toward the Americanization of our social programs and toward the end of universality. What the chairman of the finance committee said is that we have