

The Budget—Ms. Clancy

which had promised programs that would at least hold the line on a regional economic downturn, delivered a betrayal of proportions rarely seen in this country.

The national child care program—and although it was badly flawed, at least it was there—suddenly disappeared. Gone was a program desperately needed by latch-key kids and their parents. Transfer payments for post-secondary education and health care were to be reduced by 1 per cent a year for five years. Via Rail budgets were cut by \$541 million this year alone. The very existence of crucial rail links were threatened. Economic regional development agreements to various sectors were ominously not even mentioned. There was a new federal sales tax on scores of goods and services. There was a surtax on every Canadian taxpayer, including those at subsistence levels. There was an increased surtax on the hard-pressed middle income worker. There were cuts to foreign aid, cuts in defence spending, and cuts to the CBC of \$50 million over four years. There was an almost complete abdication of the role of the Government in the Unemployment Insurance Program and a mortal blow to seasonal workers who depend on UI.

I might make a comment for my friend, the Hon. Member for Cumberland—Colchester, who spoke before. I am thinking of the seasonal workers in Cumberland—Colchester, many of whom travelled to Halifax and who were my clients. They will suffer desperately because of those cuts in unemployment insurance.

Mr. Simmons: He doesn't care.

Ms. Clancy: I know. None of them do.

Overriding all that there is a new word in the Canadian lexicon which strikes fear into the hearts of young and old alike and that word is "claw-back". Yet there is another tax, this time a tax that ends more than 50 years of the honourable tradition of universality in two of the keystones of our social survival network: the old age pension and the family allowance. The concept of universality has survived many attacks, until now. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) gazed deep into the eyes of the Canadian electorate and swore that those programs were sacrosanct. Those are his words, not mine. Now the Government says it is sorry, it just tripped over the deficit which it did not notice during the election

campaign. There was no mention of the deficit. The Conservatives sullied somewhat their blue lips when they asked Canadians to trust them last fall.

• (1530)

Canadians were given spending commitments of \$17 billion until a scant five months after election night when their trustworthy government bludgeoned them with taxes and lacerated them unmercifully with cuts.

Senior citizens plan for their retirements, they don't just wait around until the day comes without any thought as to how they will survive after 65. Fifty thousand dollars a year for two pensioners is not poverty, no, but it is not wealth either. In an urban riding like mine, with one of the highest costs of living in the country, clawing back the old age pension can and will seriously jeopardize the plans and the lifestyles of these seniors.

Even more serious is the creation of two types of senior citizens; those who are perceived by the Government to be in need and those who are not.

For example, there is a woman in my riding. She is in her seventies and collects approximately \$40 a month from a private pension plan from a job she worked at eight hours a day, 40 hours a week, for 40 years. She receives \$40 a month but that was the state of private pension plans during her working life. She will not apply for the Guaranteed Income Supplement, no matter what we say to her. We cannot convince her to apply for the Guaranteed Income Supplement because her Nova Scotian pride, borne by all of us including my friend from Cumberland Colchester (Mr. Casey), wrongly tells her this is a hand-out.

On the other hand, she believes the old age pension is acceptable because everyone over 65 receives it, regardless of income level. She receives this desperately needed funding with her dignity intact. Also intact is her belief that this pension is in some small way a return for a lifetime of contribution to the Canada that we know. This a belief that I think is held strongly by all older Canadians and one that the Government is tampering with to its peril.

Abandon universality and with it goes this dignity and this belief and indeed the commitment to the Canadian future that we all want and, perhaps most important of all, the sense that Canada appreciates her senior citizens