

Oral Questions

providing jobs for students and others, that is an even better reason why the Government should not be doing this to senior citizens.

In light of all those facts, would the Prime Minister not reconsider deindexing pensions for the people who need the money the most? Will he not come clean and say to the seniors in the country that he is going to abide by the clear commitment he made to them during the election campaign, and since, and will not touch their pensions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is both a sensitive and important question, very properly framed by my hon. friend. We have fully indexed the GIS. We have fully indexed payments to veterans. We have extended payments to widows and widowers between 60 and 64 years of age. We have extended the provisions of disability to include some 120,000 more Canadians. We have done all of these things because we are trying to make the social programs economically sustainable and durable in Canada. They are gravely jeopardized by the burgeoning mountain of debt which now calls upon Canada to pay more in interest than to our entire social welfare infrastructure.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Why make the poor pay?

• (1140)

Mr. Mulroney: I hear criticism from the Liberals, the same people, with their six and five program, who deindexed pensions of the elderly by 6 per cent and 5 per cent. That's what is wrong.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL SECURITY

CONSULTATION WITH THE ELDERLY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal-Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Right Hon. Prime Minister will show a little more dignity and respect in answering questions about the elderly than he did just now.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister acknowledged that when he tabled this document in January, he was aware of the financial situation of this country, and he made a commitment to the Canadian people and to Parliament that changes in social programs would not be used to reduce the deficit. The Prime Minister has deceived Canadians once again.

To make up for this, is the Prime Minister at least prepared to meet another commitment he made on July 26 in Sherbrooke, his eighth commitment, and I quote:

To consult directly with senior citizens' groups on legislation that concerns them.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to meet with all senior citizens' groups next week or the week after?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Budget papers make it quite clear that the Government is going to monitor very closely the views of the public and how the situation develops, and when appropriate and if necessary and when we are in a position to do so, we will take the appropriate measures. I think that is in the Budget in black and white. It is a public secret.

I said yesterday that the position taken by the Hon. Member and the Official Opposition was a surprise to me, because they were saying the exact opposite three years ago. For instance, this morning I read in an editorial: "Crocodile tears shed by the Liberal Party." The article said: "Their 6 & 5 policy introduced at a time of spiralling inflation had cut deeply into benefits for the elderly." That is what you did with your hypocritical and dishonest policies, and we are now trying to correct the situation.

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, how does the Prime Minister expect the Canadian people to believe his second paper when he has failed to keep his word and his commitments in connection with that paper?

THE ELDERLY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal-Sainte-Marie): My supplementary to the Prime Minister is as follows: Will the Prime Minister have the intellectual honesty to do what the MacEachen Budget did, since they are saying that a Liberal Budget had deprived those most in need, which is just not true . . . I will read what it says here:

Pensioners most in need must also be fully protected from the limitation on the indexing factor. The Guaranteed Income Supplement for senior citizens . . .

An Hon. Member: Ask your supplementary!

Mr. Malépart: That is my question to the Prime Minister, Sir.

. . . with lower incomes will continue to be fully indexed. In addition, everyone receiving GIS will get a supplement to the GIS payment offsetting fully the limitation on indexation of Old Age Security payments.

Why pick on senior citizens, Mr. Speaker? What they want to know is what the Government has against senior citizens, especially those who are most in need. What reason do they have for not giving them what the Liberals were prepared to give?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, what a petty and hypocritical question! The Hon. Member ought to be ashamed to ask such a question. The elderly in Quebec and Canada know perfectly well that economic renewal is necessary, that it is the cornerstone of any decent guaranteed income or social security program. All Canadians,