

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that Bill C-28, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Federal Post-Secondary Education and Health Contributions Act, the Old Age Security Act, the Public Utilities Income Tax Transfer Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act and a related act, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): When the House rose at 1 p.m. the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing had the floor. The hon. member.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, as I was saying, we have seen in the changes and the clawback to family allowances and old age security massive protests across the country from young and old, from all Canadians, to the end to universality of social programs. The government on the whole has insisted that there is not attack on universality in these programs and yet there are, as we know, members on the government side who have recognized, indeed, that universality is under attack and is being threatened by this legislation.

In addition, the government's own advisory body, the National Council on Welfare, made it quite clear that it sees these clawbacks as putting an end to universality. The Council says there is no question that the clawback puts an end to universality. A social program that delivers benefits to everyone and then collects them back from some recipients is not universal. That is clearly the case, and that from a government-appointed advisory board. Surely the government should take some notice of those it appoints to advise it on important matters of social policy as in this case.

In addition, apart from ignoring the advice of Canadians from all across the country, the government had, prior to the election, made commitments to Canadians, as we know, and in particular the Prime Minister made commitments as to the sacred trust with regard to social

programs. In addition, as late as 1985 the government in fact had committed itself not to introduce a clawback or a surtax on old age pensions on the grounds that it would seriously disrupt the retirement income system.

So in spite of commitments over a long period of time from all parts of the government, in spite of ignoring the advice of Canadians everywhere, the government has gone ahead to implement a program which is divisive and which attacks the social programs and the values that Canadians have held so dear.

If the government had wanted to know how Canadians felt, if the government had wanted to know what Canadians thought about its proposal with regard to clawbacks on old age security and on family allowances, it could have asked those groups across the country who work for senior citizens and for families.

For example, with regard to senior citizens, there are many to whom the government could have spoken with regard to obtaining advice. It could have, for example, spoken with people like Frances Pettit in my own city, the president of Senior Citizens Action Now in Saskatoon, a strong and effective advocate for senior citizens in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan. She has spoken out strongly and consistently against these measures and of course will continue to do so because they are wrong. The government could have spoken to people like her. They could have spoken to many, many representatives of senior citizens across the country and got their information. Surely then the government would have seen the light and not introduced a measure which begins to put an end to universality.

In spite of what the government has said, clearly the clawbacks in this bill are the beginning of the end of universality. The impact of these measures, these clawbacks, these attacks on senior citizens and families, will be major. Average families all across the country will lose some or all of their family benefits.

As I said, we should be supporting families, not attacking them. We should be supporting seniors, not attacking them. Yet clawbacks on old age pensions, as set out in this bill, will catch 120,000 pensioners by 1990 and within 20 years time will attack over 1 million pensioners. This is not a measure which just attacks a few, but one which goes on to attack a very large number of pensioners in this country. The same goes for the attacks on families. In 1990 roughly 14 per cent of families will have