

universal program has been created it has been on the basis of age requirement or the existence of a family. It goes to all people regardless of income level. As my Leader stated this morning, it is very true that if you design systems and programs only for the poor, they will ultimately become poor programs.

The concept of universality understood by Canadians is not the one which I have just indicated. There have been times in the past when the government of the day, usually a Liberal Government, has decided that certain groups in our society who we feel need help more than others have had certain programs targeted to them. If one studies the concept of universality one will see that there is a horizontal program of services available to all. In addition to that, there are specifically designed vertical programs in the system which feed money to the people in our society who need help the most. The child tax credit is one of those areas, as is the guaranteed income supplement. I would like to remind Members opposite that when we wanted to target certain groups in our society, that was done by way of an add-on to the spending in the social envelope. It was never done on the backs of middle-income people. That is an important difference in this debate.

I will now discuss how I feel about the mandate which was given to the Conservative Government on September 4 and the way in which I feel the Government has misled the Canadian public. If we are going to have a proper debate on this issue it is fundamental that all Members on the front bench speak the truth in this building with one voice. In that regard I have some serious doubts about the intent of the Conservative Government. I do not underestimate the mandate that was given to the Conservative Party on September 4. Two hundred and eleven seats is a pretty massive rejection. With the 211 seats which the Government won came a responsibility to provide good legislation and good government.

Let us not go back to the rhetoric, but on September 4 the Canadian public did not give the Government a mandate to dismantle the social programs built up by decades of Liberal administrations in the country. In the rhetoric of the election campaign the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) was quoted as saying that universality was a sacred trust never to be broken. He also said during the election campaign that, if anything, they were going to augment social programs to help those in our society who need help more than others. After September 4 the Government indicated in *A New Direction for Canada* that it wants to have a good, open, honest debate on the issue.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has stood up and said that he intends to use some of the money saved in this review of social programs for deficit reduction. His Prime Minister is quoted as having said that any money saved from this review of social programs will be redirected only to those people in our society who need help the most. In committee the Minister of National Health and Welfare said that one of the options still under consideration was to use the money saved in that review to help reduce the size of the deficit. That is the first confusion.

### *Borrowing Authority*

Second, the Minister of Finance is saying that he is considering a specific tax-back on the benefits available to the elderly and through family allowance. Yet that is consequently denied by his own Minister of Health, who said that rather than looking at a direct tax-back the Government is looking at the possibility of an over-all general tax increase to cover the cost of those programs. That creates more confusion in the minds of the public. A member of the Cabinet who is the Leader of the Government in the Senate says that means tests are still on the table for discussion at Cabinet. That is reported in the *Hansard* debates of the Senate. That adds more confusion to the matter.

I will now come back to what the Government is actually intending to do. It is confusing to Members of the Liberal and New Democratic Parties and it also, as I mentioned in Question Period this morning, causes confusion for Government back-benchers who do not understand if the Government is clear in the direction in which it wants the debate to continue.

The Government document *A New Direction for Canada* indicates that some \$8.3 billion of government revenues is redirected into old age pensions. Of that \$8.3 billion only \$450 million is recovered in tax. I would like to point out that the reason there is only \$450 million of tax-back is that 95 per cent of Canadians who receive old age pension cheques are in the lower income levels on a 5 per cent marginal tax rate. I question the value of a review of that system when the individuals who will be subject to that review have so little to live on.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare was quoted as having said that the review would be of families with incomes between \$26,000 and \$41,000. The Prime Minister was talking about the nine bank presidents in the country who earn around \$500,000 a year. There is a great difference between a bank president and a family who earns between \$26,000 and \$41,000 a year. The average International Nickel Company worker in Sudbury, the average worker in Hamilton and the average worker in metro Toronto earn \$26,000 a year. I do not think the Minister of Health is serious when he says that a family which earns \$26,000 a year is perhaps getting too much in terms of family allowance.

I said at the beginning of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, that no one in the House has a monopoly on compassion or virtue. We have as much concern for those groups in our society that require help more than others as anyone else. I am only suggesting to the Minister of Health that if the intent of the Government's exercise is to redirect funds to that avenue, then let us broaden the debate so that you will not attempt to aid those who need help more than others on the backs of the middle-income people in the country. That is at the heart and essence of the debate.

If the Government is serious about finding a way to get a better delivery of services to the poor in our society, I suggest that the Government should not dare to dismantle the existing programs and should take a further look at the tax system. As the Leader of the New Democratic Party said this morning, it should be broadened to include the revenues we lose through