

Government Orders

in such legislation. It is taking money away from people who have paid for the privilege of receiving this pension.

The Senate proposed a special amendment to deal with those who contributed to this fund before 1972 so they will get an additional \$75 break on the tax. I submit that that is fair, reasonable, and is a recognition of the fact that people contributed money on the understanding that they would receive money back in the form of a pension.

I cite the most recent example of abuse of trust by this government, Bill C-69, which we dealt with the other day, and which the British Columbia Supreme Court last week said is a breach of the government's obligations to the provinces. The provinces sign agreements, and the government comes along and unilaterally tears them up—just rips them up.

Can you imagine any citizen of this country behaving in this way? The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie would not go and tear up an agreement he had signed, saying he was not going to honour it. The hon. member for Ottawa South or the hon. member for York Centre would not do that. I do not think the Associate Minister of National Defence, in her personal capacity, would even think of doing a thing like that. Yet, for some reason, when these members become ministers of the Crown, they run about gaily tearing up agreements right, left and centre saying: "We are not going to honour our obligations anymore. We do not have to, we are ministers. Somehow we are exempt from the law. We do not have to do this. We can just rip up agreements, willy-nilly, throw them to the four winds and ignore our contractual obligations".

I submit in this case the Senate has brought the government to account. It said that it will not let the government breach its obligation to the seniors of Canada, which it proposes to do. It will not let the government get away with this breach of undertaking. The government will have to pay back the money paid into the fund. It will have to make allowances for people to keep the money they contributed to the fund. They are entitled to receive the pensions and are entitled to keep the pensions, not have them taken away by the

whim and will of a government that ignores, and is bent on ignoring, public opinion in Canada.

The Minister of State for Finance in his consideration of these matters has put forward arguments to turn down the Senate amendment that are technical, narrow and highly procedural. He has not put forward substantive arguments to say these amendments are unfair and diminish the value of this legislation in any way. I suggest they are designed to improve the situation of seniors in Canada who are being forced to pay this unfair, regressive tax. It could be made fairer and less regressive. The threshold could be fully indexed to taxation and there could be an allowance made for those who contributed to the old age security fund for up to 20 years.

These are the amendments that the Senate, the other place that the government keeps saying is so undemocratic and so autocratic, has proposed to the bill. Surely the government should look at them and say that that institution is really something. It is doing something for Canadians. It is doing something for the taxpayers who are being treated unfairly in Canada. Instead of that, the government comes up with this motion that says the Senate violates the traditional legislative role asserted by the House in the fulfilment of its obligations under the Constitution Act, and say they contradict the principles of this bill. There is only one principle in the bill, the principle of which is to tax the subject. These amendments do not violate that principle, they lighten the burden and, as the minister said, in some cases they increase the burden.

The minister says they are spending money they are not authorized to spend. The minister should read this bill again because there is no expenditure of money contemplated in this bill. It is simply a reduction of taxes in these amendments. The bill itself does not authorize expenditure of money. It grabs money from Canadians unfairly, improperly, and, I submit, it should have been defeated when it was in this House. Like the New Democratic Party, we hope that the Senate might defeat this kind of bill but unfortunately, I am not sure it is something that it ought to be engaged in at least to that extent.

As I said, we in this party support the very logical amendments that the Senate has moved to this bill. We believe that the record of the government when it claims it has acted fairly and in the interests of all Canadians is wrong. We believe that the statement of the minister