

Oral Questions

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I think the major question here has to do with the number of people who are in poverty across this country and we recognize that.

I did mention two or three programs with regard to consolidating the funds under these very difficult fiscal times to direct what funds are available at those particular people who need them most: the seniors, the single parents, the unemployed, and indeed the children.

With regard to the UN report, we have not cut funding of social services at all. Our transfer payments under the Canada Assistance Plan have gone up over 5 per cent every year since 1985. We have put more money into social services than any other program and we will continue to target those most in need.

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PENSIONS

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare I direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister.

Many seniors in Canada are worried about the future of their pensions. Seniors have been paying taxes all their lives and deserve decent incomes. Why are the members of the government attacking the universality of Canada's old age pensions?

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, we are not attacking what he called the pensions of senior citizens.

Dealing specifically with the old age assistance program certainly there is an area at \$50,000 to \$52,000 where a portion is taxed back. That is only using common sense when dealing with fiscal constraints. Those people most in need are receiving the funding.

Now if the hon. member is reviewing the area of the Canada Pension Plan, under law that is totally self-sufficient. We are not cutting back at all. In the legislation that co-ordinates the provinces and the federal government, we are not cutting back. We are making sure it is solvent.

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is for the same parliamentary secretary.

Seniors have come to learn that promises from this government are wasted ink. Tory leadership candidates are questioning medicare and old age pensions and they have not consulted the people who will be most affected.

Why is the government unilaterally attempting to destroy Canada's pension system?

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I think I referred to that in my answer to the first question. We are not targeting universality, nor are we targeting seniors' pensions, not at all.

With regard to the OAS funding, it is there and those people most in need receive it. The Canada Pension Plan is self-sufficient.

If the hon. member wants to discuss the leadership convention he will notice very carefully that all the leadership contestants said that maybe all social policies should be reviewed and that all the people across the country would participate along with the three levels of government.

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REFUGEES

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

As he no doubt knows the group headed by Sister Mary Jo Leddy at a press conference yesterday in Toronto has thanked the Prime Minister for his encouraging responses, through June Callwood, concerning 23 rejected refugee claimants now facing deportation. The group has sent the Prime Minister evidence that these are real refugees in danger of persecution in their homeland.

• (1445)

Will the minister assure this House that he will conduct a special review of these cases before July 1, 1993, examining new evidence on those cases and evidence of inadequate or insensitive processing of those cases?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, officials of the depart-