

consumer products and then take away a program that would allow younger couples to afford a home. This legislation is drawing away consumer power from Canadians. It is taking away money from those who can least afford to give it up and is making their pockets much emptier while making wealthier pockets fuller. This is helping to widen the gap between rich and poor, between haves and have-nots.

● (1550)

Over the Christmas break, results of an interesting study undertaken by *Maclean's* in co-operation with Decima Research were published. One of the major findings in that national study was the fact that a significant number of Canadians are growing more concerned about the differences between the rich and the poor. Simultaneously, they are concerned that there is coming into being a well defined stratification of different socio-economic classes. They are equally concerned that the Conservative Government cannot bridge that gap. The Conservative Government is seen as the one that is widening the gap and playing to its special constituencies. I would suggest that in the years to come, the perception highlighted by that study will be dominating discussion in the House.

In the past, we may have had our differences when it came to provincial issues, regional issues and even linguistic issues. However, what we have not seen and what we should not see in the future is a debate based upon the classification of economic wealth. We seen in other parts of the globe well defined class struggles and Canadians fear that this is beginning to take hold in Canada. One can see why that fear is beginning to be felt by Canadian families. That reason can be shown by the examples I outlined a few moments ago.

If we begin to increase the taxes paid by a family earning \$15,000 per year by 36 per cent and the taxes of a family earning \$200,000 per year or more by only 2 per cent, of course there will be a backlash. Of course there will be protests from those earning \$15,000 annually who will not be able to take it any more and will not be able to shoulder the Government's deficit reduction plans by themselves. We need the help of all Canadians to shoulder the weight of the Government's economic renewal, if that is in fact what it is doing, and I think it is not.

The Government Party promised Canadian prosperity and economic renewal. What Canadians forgot to ask is economic prosperity for whom. Where are the provisions in this legislation that indicate that we as the Parliament of Canada are honestly looking at the interests of all Canadians and of all regions? We cannot say that we are.

We could go to any constituency and ask the senior citizens what they thought was fair about the attempt at deindexing their pensions. We could ask any individual earning \$15,000 per year whether he thinks it is fair that he should shoulder an increase in tax payments of almost 40 per cent. We could ask any Canadian mother who is receiving a monthly cheque whether or not she would like to continue to receive the entire amount. We could ask any Canadian family if it should be

prepared to pay more than its own fair share and more than the energy corporations that are receiving \$8.4 billion bonanzas are paying. The answers are very obvious.

We cannot talk of equity and fairness when talking in terms of the numbers to which I have referred. That is the message Canadians are sending the Government. That is why we saw a serious slippage in the Government's popularity in the latest polls. That was not surprising.

Government Members went across the country, constituency to constituency, region to region, promising every interest group its fair shake during the election campaign. Of course, members of the middle and working classes decided to give the Conservatives a try. However, what has been delivered to them? What are they faced with? They are faced with inequity. They are faced with a Conservative Government which is historically preoccupied with the exact constituency to which this piece of legislation delivers. This is proving the old saying that Tory times are tough times. They are not tough times for the multinationals or for those who can afford to benefit from the capital gains tax exemption but for the majority of average working Canadians who put in eight-hour days and ask themselves if they are going to make it this month.

There is going to be a tremendous revolt in this country. I am not trying to sound alarmist. I am simply trying to follow the trends that are emerging. There is going to be a tremendous revolt if the Government continues in the economic direction it is taking because it is a perverse direction. It is a direction that alienates and ignores the majority of average working Canadians. The Government points out that 400,000 jobs have been created since it took office. I would like to see the real statistics. The bulk of those jobs are part-time jobs, jobs without any benefits and short-term rather than long-term jobs.

The real problem with the Government and with this piece of legislation is that average Canadians perceive themselves as being hoodwinked. If the Government were to say that we are in tough times and that in the next five to six years, we will all have to make sacrifices and work together in order to secure a healthy and prosperous future, that would be fine. That would be acceptable not only by the Government but by opposition Members whose role it is to ensure effective and proper Government. That is a language that Canadians would not only understand but would be prepared to accept. However, they are not prepared to accept a message from the Government indicating that the poor, working and middle classes are going to be taxed more and that those who already have a lot are going to get more. That is not a partnership. That is not collective action. That is an elitist, regressive and historically Conservative approach to the economic woes of Canada. It is not an approach that will make things better.

The Government may try to cover up in the short term but I assure the Government that that is not a long-term solution and it is not a solution that bodes well for the socio-economic forces in Canada. If the Government continues to move in this direction, it will fuel the fire of unfairness. There will be more class struggles, something that we have been able to proudly