

assurance that their pensions will not be cut. So, some will have their benefits reduced and no one will receive an increase.

Another important point has to do with family income determining pension eligibility. This measure is unacceptable, since women have fought for financial independence for decades.

It is not a new measure. The government was preparing similar changes to the unemployment insurance plan as part of the social program reform. Given women's general opposition to the idea, the Liberal majority on the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development did not recommend linking benefit levels to family income levels. This is in the report by the committee on social program reform.

It is noteworthy that old age pensions have already been reduced for seniors with an income over \$53,000. The Liberals decided, in the last budget, to reduce the tax credit for seniors with an income over \$25,000. The federal government is continuing to go after the incomes of seniors, particularly those in the middle class.

Old age pensions are a major source of revenue for seniors. Federal government documents indicate that old age security and guaranteed income supplements accounted for 28.9 per cent of the income of single men; 41.3 per cent of the income of single women and 25.9 per cent of the income of couples, in 1989.

The government announced a review of the Canada pension plan, the CPP, for the fall. The federal and provincial finance ministers are scheduled to meet as part of the five-year review of the Canada pension plan. They will use this opportunity to claim that a review of old age pensions is mandatory.

• (1040)

The federal government does not have to change the old age pension system unless, that is, it wants to cut the budget at the expense of seniors.

Quebec seniors had the opportunity to state their opinions on their future at hearings of the seniors' commission on the future of Quebec. The chairperson of the committee was a minister in the former Conservative government, Monique Vézina. This consultation has shown that seniors across the country have similar concerns, mostly about their social and economic situation.

Quebec is going through a difficult economic period. Some of the witnesses at the hearings told of the problems they are having with unemployment or poverty because of the constant threat of cuts to social programs and the health care system.

Representatives of the Quebec Federation of Senior Citizens (QFSC) told the commission that their organizations were fighting the four main problems affecting seniors: the feeling of uselessness, inactivity, insecurity and isolation. Almost every-

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where people are lobbying for society to guarantee seniors their rightful place. Seniors want nothing more than to use their experience for the good of the society they will leave behind for their grandchildren. It is clear that the universality of old age pensions should not be tampered with.

Lucien Bouchard, the Leader of the Official Opposition, recently shared with Quebecers his party's reaction to the federal government's position on pensioners. He said:

After hitting pensioners with annual incomes of more than \$26,000 with a tax last year, the federal government has continued to go after them. The Minister of Finance has made it very clear that the universality of old age pensions is definitely a thing of the past, since in the future, pension benefits will be based on combined family income, and this will result in the loss of financial independence for thousands of women. By waiting until after the referendum to cut into social security, the federal Liberals are hiding the negative ramifications of their cuts from Quebecers. Be assured, Mr. Speaker, that the Bloc Québécois will do its utmost to prevent the government from making the needed spending cuts at the expense of seniors, the unemployed and people who are most in need of health care, post-secondary education and social assistance.

The federal government should cut \$2.85 billion more from the Department of National Defence's budget for the next three years instead of looking to seniors' programs next autumn to reduce its deficit.

You can be sure, Mr. Speaker, that, as the official opposition critic for seniors' issues, I pledge to fight any proposal the federal government might make to reduce its deficit at the expense of seniors.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot tabled in this House an amendment that I am happy to support.

Bill C-76 is inconsistent and the Minister of Finance should go back to the drawing board and introduce in this Chamber a bill that truly reflects what Canadians want, which is to see more fairness in the government's handling of its fiscal responsibilities.

The absence, or in some cases, the weakness of certain measures in this bill are of particular concern to me. I would like to speak about two of them. First of all, there is the government's science and technology strategy. In his last report, the auditor general deplored the lack of a government strategy with respect to science and technology. He stressed the importance of such a strategy, in light of the liberalization of trade and the new technological era we would be entering in the 21st century.

• (1045)

The government must demonstrate strong leadership in this area, so that Canada can continue to develop technologically and to maintain its competitiveness on international markets. The standard of living of Canadians and Quebecers depends on it. There must be some sign of this leadership in the government's budget. It is the cornerstone of any strategy to put Canadians back to work. Unfortunately, there is not a trace in this budget of any strategic planning with regard to research, science and