

Government Orders

In the last election a number of my colleagues in the Liberal Party and I were faced with the accusation that we used scare tactics particularly when we talked to senior citizens about pensions.

If we used scare tactics, what is this but the realization of what we talked about? When I talked to senior citizens in Halifax in the 1988 campaign, we talked about how safe their pensions were and we talked about the old age pension. I did not ask every senior citizen who I talked to in the 22 senior citizens' complexes across the riding of Halifax or in the houses and apartment buildings where I met them door to door, what their income from all sources was and say that if they fell into this category they may lose something. Almost every one of those seniors to whom I talked had contributed to that old age pension. They felt that it was a part of an investment that they had made in themselves and in this country and they are angry and disappointed that the tables have been turned on them and that they are going to lose this money.

• (1830)

I began my remarks tonight by talking about fairness. It has been said before by practically everyone who has spoken this evening on this side of the House, but it bears repeating. Where is the fairness in a couple with a joint pension income of over \$50,000 but individually of \$26,000 a piece, for example, being exempt from this while another couple where one person has the income is getting clawed back? Where is the fairness in the family where there is one wage earner who makes in excess of \$50,000 and therefore gets clawed back, while in a family where there are two wage earners whose aggregate salary reaches this figure does not get touched?

There just comes a point, Madam Speaker, where it goes beyond the question of fairness and becomes a question of common sense. Every member on the other side of the House has examples of this in his or her riding. Every one of them has people who are going to be distressed and upset about this. It does not seem to me to make any kind of sense either in the realm of fairness or in the realm of good policy or good politics. I guess in the long run it is somewhat akin to the commercial that says, "You can't fool mother nature", and mother nature is

going to be a little upset when mother nature goes to the polls.

However, I think that there are so many reasons for upset at this point that it may well be that the government just figures there is nothing left to lose. Just as an aside, I must say I was happy to see that in the province of Nova Scotia—and I say this to make the members opposite feel better—the federal Conservatives are doing much better than the provincial Conservatives, the federal Conservatives being at 14 per cent and the provincial ones being at 13 per cent.

Mr. Duhamel: What are the Liberals at, 68 per cent?

Ms. Clancy: I think it was 68 per cent, it might have been 70 per cent.

We talk about fairness; we talk about families. I have listened to the members on the other side of the House who on occasion seem a little bit afraid of some of the developments of modern history particularly relating to the status of women. I can only say to a government that claims to be family oriented and claims to be in favour of the family, that if this is the way that it treats its friends, it is no wonder that it has so few.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Halifax for her intervention. She made reference to 1935 when the Liberal government introduced universal programs. Is she aware that in fact it was as a result of A.A. Heaps, J.S. Woodsworth and Agnes Macphail and others in the Ginger Group who forced the Liberal government, when they held the balance of power as CCFers, to introduce that legislation?

Ms. Clancy: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam. Liberalism goes back many generations in my family and we have never been averse to using other people's good ideas. We have never been averse to using those ideas for the benefit of the people of Canada. We have never been averse because, being a party that gets into power fairly frequently, it is lucky that somebody will use these ideas.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her perceptive and insightful comments. There are three points I want to make.

You will recall the attempt on the part of the government to bring about deindexation. A lot of people are