

Mr. Young: I'm smiling at the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

I personally find this part of the Budget to be deeply offensive. I find it deeply offensive to the senior citizens who were told time and time again that the Government would not touch the pensions and would in fact restore full indexation on pensions. Government Members made that promise at the time of the six and five program.

Whether one takes a broad view of the Budget or a narrow view, a commitment was clearly made to every senior citizen during the election campaign, following the election campaign and during the discussions on the benefits paper. That is what I find so offensive. I think the question of deindexation of pensions must be addressed, regardless of what else is in the Budget.

I would like to say to the Hon. Member for Saskatoon East (Mr. Ravis) that a number of senior citizens who were at that convention I attended yesterday signed the petition that was presented today by the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy). Those senior citizens were extremely angry about what the Government was doing to them. I would like the Hon. Member to take that into account.

As I indicated earlier, any Budget must be seen in the light of how it addresses human concerns. It cannot treat people as a bunch of statistics. Last summer, when they were looking for votes, government Members promised us heaven and earth in the way of pension improvements, but they have reversed their position today and say that things have now changed.

Conservative Members can use a host of arguments to try to justify their position, but I do not think they will be able to convince senior citizens. I do not think that this will wash one little bit. People see this particular item of the Budget as being a betrayal of what the Government promised them, and they ain't going to accept it. I think the Hon. Member should understand that. He is in for the fight of his life over this one issue. If he thinks that the business community has power, he should just wait until he sees "grey power". Those people will knock him flat on his keister.

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment on the remarks of the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) who spoke of Saskatchewan. On Monday, I went to the Assiniboia Gravelbourg nomination convention in the riding of Assiniboia at which 1,000 Conservatives were gathered. It was interesting to note that the Budget was the subject of discussion. I had senior farmer after senior farmer tell me that, due to the Budget, they had been saved from a lifetime of work. The farmers told me that under the former Government, they would have lost the only pension program which they had. Senior farmer after senior farmer complimented us on the Budget.

● (1540)

I say to the Hon. Member who has just spoken that the Budget has brought a very positive response from Saskatchewan. It has been well received that we have kept intact the

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principle of universality. The people of Saskatchewan are very pleased with the Budget.

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, I cannot let that go without some comment. He was talking to Conservatives. I am talking to Canadians.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): What is the difference?

Mr. Young: I thought that the Government was elected to represent Canadians generally, not only Conservatives.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, I could go out and talk with a bunch of NDPers and they would firmly condemn the Government, in principle, because it has given them a Budget which will hang them. I am not only speaking with NDPers, I am talking to Conservatives as well. Conservatives were on the hot line show yesterday and they did not agree with the Government. I have spoken with Liberals and they do not agree with the Government. I am still waiting for the day when government Members will come into the House and tell me that Cabinet Ministers have spoken with seniors and that they are prepared to identify the people with whom they have spoken. I have not seen any evidence of that. Government Members were asked time and again today with whom they have spoken. We asked them to give us names or the names of groups. But we did not receive an answer. Once government Members can come into the House and tell us that, I will listen to them a bit more closely than I have in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The period for questions and comments has now expired. We will now resume debate with the Hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp).

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate and to put forward various points of view. The Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), and I, despite our political differences, are very good friends. I would like to tell him, when he speaks to the Conservatives of Canada, that they are Canadians as well. While it might have been a slip of the tongue—

Mr. Young: The heat of debate.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): That is fine. He can be selective with whom he chooses to speak and I can be selective with whom I choose to speak. That debate could take up a lot of time in the House. I do not think that would be very useful. I think we must return to the point of the debate.

He has a position—and I say this to him from an objective point of view, though he may question my objectivity—which the NDP has generally held. That position is to spend more money, spend ourselves out of debt and out of a burgeoning increase in the debt load and the servicing of the debt. Members of the NDP believe that if we keep on spending, we can turn around the economy. I happen to disagree with that philosophy. However, I do not disagree with him that his Party has been consistent in putting forward that philosophy. While