

*Oral Questions*

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

UNIVERSALITY OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS—GOVERNMENT  
POSITION

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign the Minister of Finance called me a liar because I predicted that he would cut social programs in this country.

Even the Prime Minister told Canadians again that to him the principle of universality was sacred and that it was one of the basic tenets of this country.

Why did the Minister of Finance break the Prime Minister of Canada's solemn commitment, in his Budget?

[*English*]

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, let me just quote if I could from a book called *Honourable Mentions* written by his finance critic: "For my part I continue to wonder whether family allowances and possibly old age pensions need be universal, especially now that our federal deficits have mounted so markedly". There it is in black and white from his finance critic.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**An Hon. Member:** Seniors want an answer.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** Mr. Speaker, let me if I can here—

[*Translation*]

The main purpose of the social safety net is to help people who need it most, not to subsidize individuals with high incomes. That is the policy of this Budget.

[*English*]

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** It is the word of the Prime Minister that is at issue here. The principle of universality for him was a sacred trust, once again. Senior citizens are challenging his words.

PRINCIPLE OF UNIVERSALITY

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Minister of Finance. He knows, as do I, that citizens in this country working throughout a lifetime to help build Canada have depended on the old age pension as a right of citizenship. They have spent a lifetime being taxed and they have

planned their future on the basis of that pension. It was part of the social contract in this country, part of the universal social contract. The Minister has broken that contract. What is he going to say to the senior citizens of the country?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I say quite clearly that we not have broken this contract.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** These payments have been taxable for many, many years now. We are still using the tax system because of the huge debt problem, which I have asked all Canadians to understand and to work with us in trying to beat.

**An Hon. Member:** Not all Canadians.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** I have asked all Canadians to understand the debt problem. We are asking people to work with us to try to get this debt problem under control.

I say to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition that I have stood in this House for two weeks now and he himself has said: "Yes, we have a debt problem because, Wilson, you have increased the debt over the last four and one-half years." He knows—

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition—

**An Hon. Member:** Why don't you tell the truth?

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell the truth, I say to the Member from Newfoundland. The Leader of the Opposition is being dishonest with the Canadian people.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** I am sure the Hon. Minister of Finance does not want to pursue that particular point, at least not in quite the same language. I would hope when I recognize him that he will properly correct himself.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the way that I was expressing it, but I will make the point at any rate.

The Leader of the Opposition knows full well the only way that debt can be stopped from growing is by reducing the annual deficit. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has yet to tell us how he in any way would reduce the deficit, and that is why I say that that is not