

Government Orders

We do not need to make the rich richer, but it would be nice to be able to help those who need the help. We see further that the new rules will enable more Canadians to achieve income security in retirement, thus helping to meet the challenge of an ageing population. Once again, who does it help? The people in the lower income brackets cannot afford to pay into these plans to get the tax benefits. When they reach 65 years of age and retire, they are doomed to poverty.

We have less than 25 per cent of their income now covered through the Canada Pension Plan, et cetera. Would it not be nice to be able to look forward to knowing that you would get 50 per cent of your income replaced through a Canada pension system, to know that you would be living above the poverty line instead of in abject poverty?

Further, the government goes on to say that the new rules complement measures the government has taken to strengthen Canada's retirement income system. We have seen how strong our retirement income system is as far as the old age security goes. The strength simply is not there.

We have started now by kicking the door open to the total disintegration of universality in our old age security system. Are we starting an attack now on the Canada Pension Plan? I hope not, but I wonder, is this part of the Conservative agenda for the future of Canada? To encourage us to invest in our golden years is one thing, but to cause us to live in poverty for the majority of us is totally another.

I go on in this brief and it becomes the pattern that I was talking about. The puzzle, the key pieces all start fitting together. We turn to the next page and we see the existing system is flawed and in need of reform. Where have we heard that before? I seem to remember, since the last budget, hearing about this flawed system. It is a pattern of this government to try to convince us, the average Canadian, that what we have and have had in the past is flawed and then to start just destroying it.

Yes, many of our systems are flawed but they need to be strengthened. They need to be renovated. They need to be built up. They need to be improved. They do not need to have the very foundations that hold the structure eroded. That is what is happening with this government in many of the pieces of legislation that it is bringing forward.

We talk about some of the various systems that we have. We know that they are not going to be in existence for long if this government remains in power. The start was with the clawback. The original start was in 1985 with the original attempt to deindex pensions. We know what happened there. The government backed off because of major pressures.

I am not saying that we should not have a registered retirement savings plan. What I am saying is that plan should in fact be as the government says, a fair and flexible plan but not a fair and flexible plan for those in the \$80,000 and \$87,000 brackets. It should be a fair and flexible plan for everybody with the opportunity to live as you age in dignity, to have the opportunity to know that you are going to put three meals a day on your table when you are a senior, to have the opportunity to look forward to some degree of comfort in your declining years. That is not what we are seeing here.

Some of the provisions of this bill are reasonable provisions but they also are flawed. An example of this is the seven-year carry over. It is a provision that in some cases makes sense if we heard what the minister of privatization said in his speech. It gives the opportunity, if you have had added expenses one year and cannot afford it, to carry it forward. It makes sense to be able to do that and appears to be a little fairness.

There is also a twist to that that we have to be careful of. It can lead to abuses again by those most able to afford to fluctuate where they invest their money.

Let us look again at some of the other things this bill offers. It offers, I would suggest, a problem to some of the small and medium sized businesses which presently have pension plans for their employees. Because of the nature and the complexity of this, it has been predicted that some of these people will leave their present plans in droves because they can no longer fit within these and will simply collapse them and go to a group RRSP as opposed to some other method of deferred profit sharing or registered pension plans.

There is proposed a problem in terms of matrimonial breakdown. I have dealt in the past with matrimonial problems in my professional capacity. I know that one thing some people who separate have to deal with is the division of assets and pension plans. One proposal that could cause some problem is the one under subclause 146(16) to prohibit the transfer of retirement income