

Government Orders

the context of all of the other measures that have been taken and that has added to that fear.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place in the House of Commons this afternoon on behalf of thousands of senior citizens in the great riding of Hamilton West.

For the record, the Conservative agenda could not be more clear. With a cruel, shocking, uncaring attitude, the government has intentionally embarked on a destructive course to dismantle the entire system of old age security in this country. It is an entitlement which Canadians long struggled for, a sacred trust—there are those words again, Mr. Speaker, a sacred trust—honoured by governments over the years.

You will notice that I used the word “entitlement”. That is because the old age security is not some kind of a welfare handout, or a government payout, or, as the finance minister once called it, a benefit. It is an entitlement that seniors have paid into since 1952.

Yes, this government is clawing back. There is the image, clawing back, like some big bear, some big, ugly, hungry, wants-to-feed-his-stomach bear with a giant claw. Out it reaches to rip back, and, in essence, confiscating money that belongs to seniors.

Just a little earlier here in this Chamber this afternoon we had a member from Ontario rise in his place and say: “Hey, I haven’t heard any complaints. I haven’t had any calls on this proposed legislation”. I invite that member to hold a town hall meeting in his riding, invite the senior citizens to come and have tea with him in the afternoon so that he can hear and be in tune to what the seniors in his riding are saying. If he does not, I will shortly be having a town hall meeting in my riding of Hamilton West. If he would like to come to my riding and hear directly from seniors, I invite him to that meeting.

Time allocation and closure, for what, the tenth or eleventh time since we began sitting in April. It is the government’s way of saying let us get this unpopular measure through Parliament in a hurry because the less Canadians know the better. This government has chosen to ram Bill C-28 down our throats without full and honest discussion but, most important, without a popular mandate.

I remind those members opposite and to my right of the words uttered by their leader, the Prime Minister, on November 8 in Nova Scotia:

As long as I am Prime Minister, social programs, especially those for the elderly, will be improved, not diminished.

Will this clawback receive full debate? No. Will Canadians across this great land be given the opportunity to consider, be given the right to have some say, some input into this clawback legislation? No. Does this government show any commitment to the social needs of this great country? No. The government has failed to understand. We can go even further and say that this government has chosen, if you can believe it, to tear down the social programs, the social obligations which have made Canada the envy of the world.

It is that principle of universality, that concept of social justice, the very idea that says no matter where you live, no matter what your religious belief, no matter what your income, whether you are rich or poor, no matter what your age, you as a Canadian are entitled to that common threshold of social programs to be found in Canada. There must be one fair Canada for all. This is not the view of the Conservative government, however. Universality is not a philosophy acceptable to a true blue Tory.

There is another image: blue, cold, harsh, unforgiving. To the old age pensioner who has worked hard to scrimp and save and sock away a little in investments for the so-called golden years, the government says: “Just gimme that back and you’ve got nothing to say about it”. That is what they are saying. Closure, right?

Mr. Kempling: Bullshit.

Mr. Keyes: The hon. member for Burlington is using foul language to explain my point of view.

Mr. Kempling: You’re sick.

Mr. Keyes: Have you been hearing this, Mr. Speaker? I think other members in the House have been hearing some of the remarks being made and I think it would be only honourable if that member apologized and withdrew those remarks.

In the end, this government then turns its back on the pensioner and says: “That will teach them for being thrifty, for being responsible, for investing in this coun-