

If one examines the statistics on population trends both in Canada and in other countries, there appears to be no evidence that family allowance programs have stimulated the birth rate. This holds true even for those countries that have deliberately set about to use family allowances or other forms of income support to stimulate the birth rate. For example, population growth was the specific objective sought by the family allowance system in France. However, from 1960 to 1971, the fertility rate, that is the number of live births per 1,000 women of child-bearing age, has declined from 70.1 to 60.4 per 1,000. Czechoslovakia is another country which in the post-war period tried to stimulate population growth through family allowances and other forms of income support, but the fertility rate fell from 62.4 per 1,000 in 1960 to 51.4 per 1,000 in 1970.

It is also interesting to note the population trends between Canada and the United States over the past few years. Canada has paid family allowances since 1945; the United States has no program of family allowances. In 1960, the fertility rate in Canada was 94.6 per 1,000 and in the United States it was 86.1 per 1,000. In 1971, the fertility rate in Canada was 56.5, in the United States it was 59.3, remarkably close.

In a study conducted by the United Nations in 1965, it was found that there was a high correlation between high levels of economic growth and economic development and low birth rates. This study showed that the level of fertility divided the less developed countries from the more developed countries more consistently and more completely than any other single indicator. In the less developed countries the crude birth rate, that is, the number of live births per 1,000 of population, is still well above 30 births per 1,000, but in the developed countries it is below 30. In many it is around 15 per 1,000.

The 1965 World Population Conference reported that an advanced economy with a high per capita product requires and imposes a demographic pattern on the country under which the birth rates cannot be as high as those found in less developed countries. On the evidence I have seen, I am convinced that in an economically advanced country such as Canada, family allowances at the levels proposed would not affect the underlying factors that are encouraging and stimulating the trend toward still lower birth rates.

I think we should look at another interesting fact. Hon. members may recall that it was in 1945 that family allowances were introduced in Canada. In 1945, the average number of children under 16 years per family in Canada was 2.37. Today it has fallen to 2.17. Looking at the average number of children per family, the following comparisons are enlightening.

In 1945, Ontario had 2.06 children per family; in 1973 the figure was up to 2.15. In British Columbia in 1945, it was 1.93 children; in 1973 it was 2.09. In the province of Quebec in 1945, there were 2.86 children per family. By 1965 that figure had decreased to 2.61. In 1967, the government of Quebec introduced its own family allowance scheme in addition to the federal family allowances, yet the number of children per family continued to decrease to 2.11 today.

Hon. members will be interested to know that in 1973, British Columbia has the fewest children under age 16 per family, an average of 2.09. Contrary to popular mythology, the province of Quebec has the next lowest rate of 2.11,

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followed by Ontario at 2.15, Nova Scotia at 2.21, Saskatchewan at 2.22 and Manitoba at 2.24.

While Quebec is the second lowest province in terms of number of children per family, it is by far the lowest province with respect to the fertility rate. In 1971, there were 47.6 live births per 1,000 women of child-bearing age. The next lowest province was British Columbia with a rate of 55.4 per 1,000.

**Mr. McGrath:** Will the minister accept a question?

**Mr. Lalonde:** I will gladly answer a question after I have concluded my remarks. In global terms, families in Ontario will receive \$650 million from the federal government through this program; in Quebec \$497.5 million; in British Columbia \$183.1 million and in Alberta \$149.1 million.

I have pointed out these details because I am deeply concerned by several letters I have received recently from Canadians who believe that this program is designed primarily to benefit Quebec families. The foregoing facts simply do not support this argument, Mr. Speaker. I would therefore request the active support of all members of the House, regardless of their political affiliations, in dispelling this erroneous impression, which undermines the unity of our country.

• (1640)

Some critics have suggested that we should eliminate family allowances completely or, alternatively, limit allowances to one or two children per family. Mr. Speaker, I reject this proposition out of hand. In all humanity, one cannot argue that because parents ought, perhaps, not to have had children, we should allow the children to suffer from poverty and malnutrition. Other measures should be and are being adopted to encourage family planning. For example, my department has set up a program of public information and education on family planning. Moreover, we are promoting the training of professionals and non-professionals engaged in providing family planning services and are supporting research on family planning.

It is through improved programs of public information and education that we are trying to come to grips with the issue of family planning. It is through the family allowances program that we are hoping to improve the living standards of the present generation of Canadian children who, through no fault of their own, find themselves living in conditions of poverty.

When one adds to this \$840 million the \$300 million in additional expenditures incurred earlier this year with the increase of the old age security pension to \$100 a month, the estimated additional \$94 million to the end of the year 1973-74 resulting from quarterly escalation of OAS/GIS, the further estimated additional annual costs of \$158 million for OAS/GIS escalation in 1974-75, it will be seen that this government has added almost \$1.4 billion to social security in the last six months. These measures have all been taken in the interests of improving the standard of living of our aged and our families.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada together with the governments of the provinces is well into the joint review of social security which was proposed in the work-