

### *Family Allowances*

The third point the hon. member for Villeneuve referred to was the fact that there is a progressive decrease in the \$200 benefit once a family income is over \$18,000 per year. I understood from his comments that he felt this was rather unfair. There has to be a threshold somewhere in order for this particular legislation to make any sense at all, and it seemed logical to fix that threshold at some point around the area of what the average family income is today. That is how the figure was picked. As has been pointed out in speeches by both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the threshold is \$18,000 but, indeed, people with net incomes higher than that will continue to receive credits, though on a diminishing scale.

Again, I think along the same line, the hon. member was generally making the point that it seemed unfair to hit the wealthier families in that they would have a decrease now in family allowance payments. Perhaps that is very true, but the whole thrust of the legislation, from the time of the first announcement by my own minister on August 24 and subsequently by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, has been that we are taking a look at some of these social programs, and here is an opportunity, without increasing over-all government expenditures, to take the expenditures now being made, reallocate them in a manner that really seems to make more sense, and really help those people in areas where there is a real need.

● (2012)

Those are the only four points which I wanted to comment on at this time. I am sure there will be opportunity during the course of the debate to speak on other matters.

**Mr. McGrath:** I welcome the opportunity on clause 1, Mr. Chairman, to place a few questions on the record in the hope that they will draw the attention of the minister. I am glad to see her sitting opposite me tonight, and I am particularly happy to see that the officials of the tax department are between us, because the last time I addressed the House on this bill the minister transgressed one of the ancient privileges of the House and crossed the invisible barrier between us, which is the equivalent of four sword lengths separating the opposition from the government, and presented me with a copy of the report by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women right in the middle of my speech.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Two sword lengths.

**Mr. McGrath:** I stand corrected; it is two sword lengths. In any event, I have the protection of the department tonight as well as the two sword lengths.

I would like to place on the record a quote from the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, to which the minister was the distinguished secretary, in support of the position that I put forward during my remarks on second reading. One of the points my party put forward as part of our social program was that the homemaking spouse should be included in the Canada Pension Plan. I would like to read recommendation 103 of the royal commis-

[Mr. Martin.]

sion report; I am grateful to the minister for sending it across the floor to me:

Therefore, we recommend that (a) both the Canada and the Quebec Pension Plans be amended so that the spouse who remains at home can participate in the plan, and (b) the feasibility be explored of

- (i) crediting to the spouse remaining at home a portion of the contributions made by the employer on the employed spouse's behalf, and
- (ii) on an optional basis, permitting the spouse at home to contribute as a self-employed worker.

I would like the minister to tell us exactly what the position is of these recommendations by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women which were made some time ago. I put it to the committee, in support of the position which I placed before the House during second reading of the bill, that the government has continued to ignore most of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and particularly this recommendation, which is so important to the whole social welfare program which the government is addressing in part by the bill which is now before committee.

I would like to refer also to the remarks of my colleague the hon. member for Egmont on the effect of this bill on women in the home and the status in the bill of the married woman in the home. I would also like to comment briefly on the outstanding maiden speech of my colleague the hon. member for Rosedale. Most hon. members will agree with me that it was one of the greatest maiden speeches of the House.

In support of the position put forward by my colleague from Egmont, there was presented today to the Minister of Finance a letter—copies of which were made available to all parties in the House—from the chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. I would like to read that letter into the record. It is addressed to the Minister of Finance and is dated November 2, 1978:

The Canadian Human Rights Commission has certain reservations concerning the provisions of Bill C-10, the enabling legislation for the refundable child tax credit program, which I would like to communicate to you before the bill moves into committee of the whole this afternoon.

We are concerned that the bill makes distinctions based on marital status. The result of these distinctions is that mothers who are married are treated differently (and adversely) under the bill. The identification for special treatment of individuals whose living arrangements are based on legal marriage has a discriminatory impact.

Implicit in this provision of the bill is the intention to take family income into consideration in the determination of refundable child tax credits. We would like to be assured that the government does not intend to base its future taxation and social policies on the joint income of two spouses, which is not an adequate definition of family income.

That is precisely the argument that was put forward by my colleague the hon. member for Egmont.

The basic principle of using the income of the total family or living group will require extensive examination before its implications are fully appreciated; the Canadian Human Rights Commission urges the government not to move precipitously into this policy area.

The provisions of Bill C-10 which isolate the income of legally married women for special consideration are not consistent with the recent social phenomenon of the emerging economic independence of women. The Canadian Human Rights Commission felt it important that parliament be alerted of these concerns at this stage of policy development.

He goes on to say that he has sent copies to the Leader of the Opposition, leader of the New Democratic Party and the