

*Family Allowances*

Neither is it a women's question, except to the extent that our mothers are generally far more interested in the welfare of their children than in their own. The family allowance will neither relieve the discomforts of gestation nor greatly lighten the burden of bringing up the children, particularly that part of such burden—and it is by far the greater part—which devolves upon the mother.

It is essentially a children's problem. The basic purpose of the family allowance is to even up differences which should not exist, but which unfortunately do, between one child and another, if not at birth at least within half an hour after birth, and to bring a little nearer to genuine, practical verity that noble principle laid down in the first national document of our great neighbour state to the south—that all men are born free and equal; for, although it may be possible to produce arguments which will prove, in theory, that because prince and peasant alike come into the world naked and in need of a bath they are at that moment equal, yet I think it can be demonstrated that by the time the babies have gone home from hospital—supposing for the moment that they all were in a position to enjoy the privilege of entering the world in a nice bright hygienic hospital which, of course, is really not true—the inequalities already begin to show themselves.

One needs only to compare the meticulous care and the lavish devotion which the whole family gives to the first-born with the relatively summary treatment accorded to the tenth to realize what I mean by that observation. My wife tells me that the second child has a great advantage over the first, because its parents know how to apply that triangular garment which is a baby's first introduction to conventional decency without sticking the pin into its tender flesh. With the exception, however, of the comparatively few who happen to drop down the chimney of a penthouse apartment or a sixteen-room mansion, all the subsequent children suffer a definite disadvantage as compared with the first two, and those who drop down the chimney of the west-end mansion have a distinct advantage over those who are born into a working man's home down east or a colonist's cabin up north in the backwoods. We cannot hope ever to wipe out all these inequalities. Some of us have good mothers and some of us have better mothers. Some have good fathers; others are not so good; and no amount of legislation will convert a bad father into a good one, or cause the good father to have more children than the bad one. The experience of other countries tends to show that

[Mr. Fauteux.]

even family allowances do not have any noticeable effect on the number of children any group of parents will have. No law has yet been conceived that will change the old jesting adage, "The rich get richer and the poor get children". Whoever is to blame for that, of one thing we may be unanimously and entirely certain, it is not the fault of the children.

Hence, Mr. Speaker, it is definitely incumbent upon us to do what we can and all we can to see that the innocent do not suffer from a circumstance which may or may not result from some form of guilt. The one way in which we can best do that is, in my opinion, by providing the means whereby those children may enjoy the very best training and development of both their bodies and their minds, and that is where the family allowance comes into the picture.

The training and development of the body and the mind imply an abundance of good food, exercise, suitable clothing, sunshine, supervised play, medical, dental, ocular and psychiatric supervision, regular school attendance and adequate facilities for home study. Many of these things are given free throughout Canada, but still they are not equal. For instance, free education costs quite a bit more for a little boy in the city in which I reside, in the division which I have the honour to represent in this house, than it does, for instance, in the city of Toronto, because climatic conditions make it more costly to dress a child so that he can go to school in safety and comfort in Montreal's ruder climate than it does in the Queen City. And still further north, in the neighbourhood of Chicoutimi and the lake St. John cities and towns, or in the northern mining towns of Ontario, it costs still more. Likewise God's glorious sunshine is free to all, but it costs money to buy the little garments which will let the baby get the benefit of the sunshine without shocking the neighbours.

We have free clinics and health centres in many parts of Canada. I hope to live to see the day when every corner of this great dominion will be equipped with the necessary staff and supplies to give medical and dental supplies to every child in the neighbourhood. But the child cannot make proper use of the advice there given unless the money is available to buy whatever is prescribed. When he leaves the hospital aged ten days, for instance, the hospital probably charges him twenty-five cents for his "formula". If his parents are poor, maybe the hospital will not charge anything, but the corner grocer and the drug-store will continue charging for that "formula"