

explain to his constituents the great advantages of that legislation.

Mr. Valade: Mr. Speaker, not only am I happy to tell the hon. member that I shall invite him, but I shall even invite him to his own riding to explain the truth to his constituents.

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the exchange that has just taken place between some of the members from the province of Quebec. I wish it had been a fuller discussion, particularly on the aspect of why the province of Quebec is trying to negotiate family allowances into its sphere and what bearing the negotiations may have on the plan we are now discussing. I am interested in the fact that most Liberal members come from the province of Quebec.

Mr. Valade: That is right, and it is a shame.

Mr. Peters: I agree it is a shame, but it is a fact.

Mr. Sharp: That is not true. Among other things you cannot do, you cannot count.

Mr. Béchard: What about Ontario?

Mr. Peters: Certainly, the majority of the Liberal members come from the province of Quebec.

Some hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. Hon. members should at least give the hon. member for Timiskaming a chance to make his speech.

[Translation]

I would suggest that all hon. members wait before putting questions or making remarks, in order to give the hon. member who has the floor a chance to start his speech.

[English]

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I have said before in this House that my arithmetic is not good. Probably this is the one justification for a computer.

I was interested in the discussion that took place because in years gone by there has been a great deal of support from the province of Quebec for family allowances. I am very surprised that there should be an argument now as to whether you should use the high income figure for a family with one child as the criterion or, as the previous speaker did, use the example of five children at a much lower family income level. Obviously, the people of Quebec are not now as deeply concerned about the matter of procreation as they were previously. The birth rate in the province of Quebec is now very low. In fact, even with government intervention in the form of a family allowance program, it is the lowest in the civilized world. I am interested in the thinking of Quebec members in this regard because they are affected. It might have quite a bit to do with their future because the populations of some of the other ethnic groups in that area are multi-

plying much faster. The Indian population is enjoying a very high birth rate.

When this matter of social security payments was settled to the satisfaction of most people a long time ago, it was agreed that people would be granted certain fundamental rights because they were Canadians. One was the right to the old age pension. I remember a former Prime Minister from the province of Quebec who said in this House that he was very proud of the fact he was now able to draw the old age pension because he had reached the age at which that pension was paid to all Canadians. Mr. St. Laurent did not need the money. He had a considerable amount of money. He was proud of the fact he lived in a country which paid such a pension because he had contributed to this country and had reached the age at which he was automatically entitled to the old age pension. The wife of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who is also well off financially—and this is unusual in the Canadian Parliament—is entitled to receive this universal payment for their offspring. It seems odd that he resents this to the extent of getting rid of the universality of this program. I think it is an excellent idea that people should receive this payment without consideration being given to their incomes.

Yesterday the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) made a great thing about the unions agreeing with him, that they were willing to give up something so that it could be given to the poor. If the minister thinks that is so, he has not talked to them. No matter what income level they have reached, union members are of the opinion that, as Canadians, they have a right to family allowances. If they have six children, they believe it is their right to receive a universal payment for those children.

Mr. Munro: If they have six children, they will get a lot more under this bill.

Mr. Peters: They will not get anything. There is not a worker in the Hamilton area who receives less than the amount at which the family allowance is cut off. Certainly, the steel workers fit into the category which the government now considers to be the middle rich. There are now two thoughts being developed in Canada. The government should consider the implications of both. One concerns the middle income group of Canadians. They claim they are being taxed far heavier than anyone else and, Mr. Speaker, that is true. They ask: Why should we be taxed so heavily to pay money to others who should be able to work but who are living on unemployment insurance benefits, or, in some cases, on welfare, not necessarily through their own fault. Any reasonable government should be making every possible effort to get the economy going again so as to provide the maximum number of jobs, thus lightening the load which presently falls on the middle income group.

• (1620)

Another group in our society is saying that the nation as a whole has provided certain benefits on a universal basis because the persons receiving them are Canadians and are entitled to various concessions for that reason. We went into all this a long time ago when the principle of