

gets no consideration in payment for his services as a wage earner because of the size of his family.

Nevertheless, if it were not for large families this country would rapidly lose its whole strength as a nation. It is upon the families of this country, their numbers, the quality of their health, their vitality and strength that the future of Canada depends. Yet, under the wage system as we have it in a world of only partly regulated competition, the tendency has been to destroy family life and to depress the standard of well-being of large classes in the country. I am going to refer to this again a little later on because I think it is a very serious situation.

The fundamental justification of children's allowances is that the wage system takes no account of the family status of the wage earner, and that, in a considerable sector of Canadian industry, the wages being paid are not sufficient to give the worker a family income sufficient to keep his family in health and decency and up to a reasonably current standard. Family income must somehow be supplemented or, alternatively, a substantial portion of the population must be doomed to extreme poverty and its inevitable consequences of disease, crime, illiteracy, inefficiency and other forms of social degeneration. Allowances paid for all children, it is believed, represent by far the simplest and cheapest way of providing a supplementary family income. They avoid discrimination or social stigma and can be administered simply and cheaply. That is my reply to that particular criticism.

I intended to mention, whether I did so or not I am unable at the moment to recollect; if so I shall repeat it, that when the present administration were returned to office by the people of this country, we were continued in office for a particular purpose, namely, to prosecute the war to the utmost on behalf of the nation. We were not elected to office to introduce measures of social reform which will involve large expenditures of public money, without the people of this country having an opportunity, in the first place, to pronounce upon post-war policy. We were not given a mandate to put into effect a programme of social measures. Nor were policies of reconstruction and world rebuilding an issue in the last elections. I like the British parliamentary practice in contrast to that of some other countries, according to which it is understood that, when a ministry has fulfilled its obligations in accordance with the mandate upon which it was appointed to office, and when new questions arise which the public have not had any opportunity to consider,

the ministry, in the discharge of the trust which it owes to the people, should go to the people, present the new issue, and give them an opportunity to pass upon it. That is what we intend to do.

Part of our duty has, of course, been to anticipate the difficulties which will arise in the post-war period, and to prepare those measures which will serve to meet the difficult questions which will arise when the war is over. No one can begin to know, except those who have had to do with it—here I refer particularly to many of our public servants, those in the civil service of this country who have been working night and day, giving of their health and strength to help to get into scientific and final shape the measures that should be presented to parliament at this time—I say that no one can know, except those who have had experience of it, what a terrific strain it has been upon the administration to have not only to further the prosecution of the war, but, as well, to have to anticipate and prepare for the problems which are going to arise in the post-war period. But we have assumed that responsibility and we are presenting our measures to this parliament at this session.

When the right moment comes we shall place before the people of this country a programme which we believe will serve the best interests of the people of Canada in the post-war period. It is for that as well as for the other reasons I have mentioned that this measure of family allowances has been fixed to go into effect on the first of July of 1945. Before this measure goes into effect, the people of this country will have an opportunity of expressing their views and their wishes in regard to it. They will have to bear the expense of it. My own belief is that the measure itself is going to create so much in the way of employment that the national income will be so increased that we shall find it possible not only to have this class of social enactment self sustaining but be able as a consequence to have as well a reduction of debt and taxation. As I said the other evening, one other reason why I myself took very strongly the position that this measure should not go into effect before a general election was that I did not wish to give to suspicious minds any occasion to think that the government might be seeking, as one leader already has said, to bribe the people. I wonder what hon. gentlemen opposite would be saying to-day if the date when this measure was to come into effect had been fixed at some time before the close of this year, and if at a time an election