

Oral Questions

ment and the Franco-Manitoban Society to find a fair and equitable solution to this problem?

Mr. La Salle: We know what to do, but you did not do anything during twenty years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We ought to let the Deputy Prime Minister answer the question.

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, even if there is merit in the Hon. Member's interpretation of the judgment, I question whether his mien and the manner in which he delivered his question in a very combative way does anything to contribute to the unity on this particular issue in our country.

I can assure the Hon. Member, and all Hon. Members of this House, that whatever is necessary on the part of the federal Government to give effect to the judgment, whatever the requirements might be after studying the judgment, will be done. I can assure the Hon. Member of that. There will be no hesitation in coming forward to fulfil the federal Government's obligation in that regard.

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THE BUDGET**EFFECT ON FAMILY BENEFITS**

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare who changed his mind once, and I hope he will change it back again. The Minister said in January that no changes were required in the OAS or GIS payments. Then the Government, of course, deindexed old age pensions.

The Minister has also preached that his Government would help those in greatest need. He said this many times. How can he say he is helping those in greatest need when many families earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000, with two kids, will have to pay up to \$500 in sales tax, will have family allowances deindexed by 3 per cent, some will have to pay income tax, and many will lose their family benefits? How can he possibly say that he is helping those in greatest need?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): First, Mr. Speaker, the term which the Hon. Member uses of deindexation is not correct. The full indexation on the Guaranteed Income Supplement is maintained and contained in the Budget. Partial indexation does apply on the Old Age Security. I hear Hon. Members say they want seniors to have clarification. Hon. Members opposite should not use words or examples which are not contained in the Budget.

Having said that, if the Hon. Member takes a look at the family benefits, part of the argument has always been from social groups—I have heard her say it herself and I have argued the same point—that the most regressive part in terms

of family benefits was that, as the tax exemption was applied, the higher the income of a family, the higher the taxable income, the greater was the benefit. That trend has been reversed. One can argue more can be done and should be done as the economy improves. I suggest to the Hon. Member that can be a consideration once we get the economy generating not only more jobs but more wealth.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the Minister that any pensioner who is on GIS is having his OAS deindexed, and further, 200,000 more will be on GIS.

An Hon. Member: That is not true.

Ms. Mitchell: Of course; they get the OAS too.

I would also like to say to the Minister that the increase he is proposing in the child tax credit is an insult to the poor. Seventy dollars the first year does not even nearly begin to cover taxes.

Does the Minister care about Canada's children? There are parents really struggling to have their children brought up and provide decent meals. If he cares, will he reindex family allowances? Also, will he have another look at family benefits and make sure any changes really go to benefit families and not the federal Government, which is what the Minister is doing now?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member persists in using a word or phrase that she knows is not correct. Deindexing, if it had been put in place, even for the OAS, would have meant absolutely no protection for any increase in the cost of living. The Hon. Member knows that is not the case. She feels if she repeats these words often enough in this House, or in other venues, that some of the people will start to believe it. That is simply not the case, and the Hon. Member knows it.

Ms. Mitchell: You are too busy preaching.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): The point I want to make to the Hon. Member again is that she now deprecates the very thing she supported in the committee. The very thing she said was to put more money in the child tax credit, because it is the fastest way to get money into the hands of families that need it. Today she changes her mind. Also, if we had taken away the \$70, the Hon. Member would have made the argument that that is a burden those families cannot bear. Suddenly, when they get the money, she says it is not enough. The Hon. Member cannot have it both ways.