

Family Allowances Act

there is very little certainty and it is no longer possible for a youngster to attend school, obtain a degree and be assured of a job for 20 to 40 years and then to retire. In fact we are all experiencing tremendous changes, very fast and severe social changes. There is a need for collective government action at this time. Very often the elderly and the children are the victims of fast social, economic and cultural changes. Yet it was the old and now it is the young which the Government attacked in its Budget.

Earlier this year the people of Canada, not just old people but men and women of all age groups and from all walks of life, joined together and created such a massive protest that the Government had to back down on its deindexation of pensions. The same will be true when it comes to the attack of the Government on the children of Canada.

Raising children nowadays is not an easy task. I should know, in that I have been a single parent for part of my life. Right now I have six children for whom I have some responsibility. They range from teenagers to a young baby. The task is certainly easier for me than it is for most of my fellow Canadians. In terms of my income, I am one of the few privileged Canadians. However, most parents do not fall into that category. Even though I am a member of this privileged class, I know that family allowance cheques are an important part of my budget. I know what it is like to purchase new running shoes and jackets for five teenagers to return to school in the fall. The purchase of such shoes can involve an outlay of some \$20 to \$40 per pair.

Also we must remember that we are living in an age of mass media advertising, much of which is directed to children. Some of the best psychologists are working on that advertising, and the children of today are subjected to forces at work which are much more powerful than in earlier days. They are concerned about peer groups and peer acceptance, much of which is affected by consumer items.

This summer I had occasion to visit some of my constituents. I knocked on doors in a low-income district. I spoke with an older, single parent woman who had a teenage son attending high school. She could not afford to buy him a new pair of running shoes. It was a \$25 to \$30 outlay which she just could not afford. Mr. Speaker, she expressed her frustration at not being able to provide her teenage son with the things that the other teenage children at school had.

● (1240)

As these families and as all families in the country do the difficult job of trying to raise their kids in a half decent way and provide them with love, a sense of security and a sense of belonging, and they, hopefully, in turn will become upright, decent and productive citizens of this country, I think families need help. They do not need to be attacked. The state cannot, Mr. Speaker, do all those things that will ensure that the kids of this country will have a decent family home, with equal opportunity and the ability to become productive citizens. The state cannot guarantee that, but the state can do those things that will help parents do their jobs.

We hear from the Tories tremendous rhetoric and they wrap themselves, Mr. Speaker, in righteous and moral platitudes about the importance of the family. I agree, the family is a very important, very essential unit for the social fabric which has been under tremendous strain. We hear many members of the Government, as they wrap themselves in this moral self-righteousness and talk about the importance of the family, denounce some miserable soul who might have got pregnant out of wedlock and seeks to have an abortion because the alternatives in her life are not very attractive. Oh, no, these moral, self-righteous people will denounce the poor child, but they are the very same ones who will attack the opportunity of that young girl to carry through with her pregnancy and to raise her child. They will attack her economic opportunity of raising that child. They will force her into an option that is unacceptable.

It is unfortunate that people are forced to discontinue a pregnancy through economic circumstances. I think that when a civilization and a society reaches that stage where people cannot continue with a pregnancy and cannot give birth and raise their children because economically they cannot afford it, then the civilization and society has reached such a low point that it can surely be considered barbaric.

Instead of this Government helping the family, helping young women make a "pro choice" it is in fact creating the economic conditions in which the opposite occurs. Surely the responsibility should be the Government's for the type of society that it is creating in this good, rich country of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I stand opposed to the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Tardif (Richmond-Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-70.

I think that when considering this legislation, we have a choice of two approaches. One is more or less mathematic, and by that I mean that, on the basis of this Bill, we can imagine a whole series of situations and scenarios in which a number of families could possibly benefit by the implementation of these provisions.

However, Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that all this is entirely hypothetical, and further assumptions must be made with respect to the inflation rate and salary levels, so that the range of possible answers is very broad indeed.

I intend to ignore this approach, for the simple reason, Mr. Speaker, that whatever the mathematics of the question may be, I feel that if there is even one case, one family in Canada where the implementation of this Bill will result in a potential or outright loss, that in itself would be reason enough to take an energetic stand against this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I would prefer another approach which considers the humanitarian aspect, that is, the impact on many hundreds of families as a result of a reduction in family allowance payments.