

Family Allowances

evening by our Minister of National Health and Welfare, who said:

The purpose of this bill is to see that the children of the nation are provided for.

Hon. members will see from a comparison of those two statements that there has been no shift in philosophy on the Liberal side of this House. I can also state that this philosophy has been accepted and applauded all these years by the people of Canada and I hope this support will continue.

From there, Mr. Chairman, I move to the first troublesome statement in last night's debate. The member who made the statement is unfortunately not in the House at the moment. I refer to the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock, who said:

When has it become the government's responsibility to look after children?

I hope the hon. member will read my remarks on his return to the House, because I would like him to hear my answer. I quote Mr. Gordon Graydon, leader of the opposition in 1944 who, if my history is correct, was leader of the Tory party. He said:

The Progressive Conservative party takes a determined and vigorous stand in favour of meeting immediately the health and welfare needs of the people of this country, especially of our mothers and their children. Let that be clearly understood right at the beginning. We take second place to no party in this parliament in the advocacy, promotion and execution of the necessary measures to ensure decent, wholesome lives, social justice and equality of opportunity to all of Canada's citizens.

Those are noble words, Mr. Chairman. I continue the quotation:

That, we contend, calls for governmental programs which will not only make possible equality of opportunity and decent levels of self-support for those capable of providing for themselves and their dependents in a civilized Christian state, but means also a fair and just bearing of the burden of meeting adequately the needs of those who by age, condition or circumstances would otherwise falter and fall in this race of life.

I think there lies the answer to the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock, who asked when had it become the government's responsibility to look after children. I think he will find that the answer was given in 1944 and, probably, long before that as well. So I say this kind of spurious question has to be abandoned and put out of the way as time wasting and contemptuous.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Tell us what the vote was in 1944.

Mrs. Appolloni: I am sorry, I do not have those records at my fingertips.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It was a recorded vote and it was unanimous.

An hon. Member: Were you here then?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Of course. Perhaps the hon. member might like to know that there was one Conservative member who was not in favour of the bill, but he was not here for the vote. So it was carried unanimously.

Mrs. Appolloni: The hon. member's good heart is exceeded only by his fantastic memory. To continue, the hon. member

[Mrs. Appolloni.]

for Surrey-White Rock has a command of English which is certainly to be admired—it is a matter of common knowledge in this House that his English is extremely good. As a matter of fact, I think he even taught English at one stage in his career. But “redistribution”? What does redistribution mean? I hesitate to impute motives to the hon. member, but if I am to understand the meaning of his question I suggest that instead of using the word “redistribution” one could more sincerely use the word “sharing”. If the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock, or any other member of the House, refuses the concept of sharing their wealth with the people of Canada who need it most, then maybe we are not quite so Christian or as civilized as we pretend to be.

Also in the debate yesterday we got into legalities. I do not profess to be a lawyer. As a person who is not a member of the legal profession, I may even admit to my own sense of frustration with the legal profession when they get so hung up on legalities and on so-called rights that in their efforts to discuss these things they totally ignore the passage of time wherein the victims of their procrastinations are left wondering and suffering.

This is what I wish to address myself to at the moment. I am not speaking as a lawyer. I speak as an extremely concerned parent who, incidentally, will by this legislation lose the money we have been getting. I would say God bless us, we are going to lose it, but we are losing it to aid children less fortunate. That is the whole philosophy behind this legislation. I will leave it to the lawyers to dispute whether or not we are infringing on human rights, whether women's rights are going to be subordinate to men's, or something like that. We are talking about sexual rights. I would in all humanity ask these legal brains to consider whose right is being overlooked in this terrible controversy. It is that of the child who needs this money.

● (1542)

If we are to be honest, sincere and responsible in our approach to the question of human rights and freedoms, surely the first thing we should want to do is ensure that the majority does not represent a tyranny which would overlook any hope for the poorest and weakest members of society. That is my concern at the moment. I am very much afraid that in this tangle of bureaucratise or legalese children's rights and needs are being overlooked, and we must avoid that at all costs.

What we are doing at the moment is clouding the issue. I shall refer again to the speech of the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock. He wonders if the government is not showing arrogance in proposing that the payments be made once a year and therefore telling mothers what to do. Here again I speak as a concerned parent. The government is not showing arrogance. It is displaying sound common sense, and I will explain why. This measure is very basic housekeeping. Some hon. members who have joined in this debate may be very good at debating some issues, but I must tell them that when they are talking about housekeeping and common sense methods, they are out of their trees.