

Adjournment Debate

going out of control or, to be more precise, painfully calling for controls? We agree with the need for long-range planning and, if necessary, a drastic recasting of our whole system. But we must not have needy Canadians suffer during the lengthy process of consultation and planning which may be necessary to bring about such sweeping changes.

An expedition of the family allowances bill would help. The Government of Canada could also offer a better deal than 50 per cent under the Canada Assistance Plan. By these two measures some interim help could be given. Such help is urgently needed by far too many of our people. I would be surprised if any of the provinces would object to their people receiving increased family allowance cheques at a date earlier than January, 1974. I call, at this late hour of the day and at this late hour of the social welfare debate, for urgent, pressing action.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say to the hon. member how much I appreciate his rhetoric and style, which is always a matter of amazement to me, coming from a culture that is not given to the use of such flowery language. The points raised by the hon. member have been raised before. I agree with him that it is obviously important in the field of social policy and the reform of social security that the need for long-term planning should not be an obstacle to immediate or early action.

I should like to point out to him that during the last few months this government has unhesitatingly shown its agreement with such a principle. First of all, we have

increased old age pensions to the tune of over \$300 million, and we have announced our intention to introduce legislation in the next few days or couple of weeks to add another \$1,200 million in increased family allowances in this country. This represents almost a tripling of the October amount of money paid in the family allowance field. I think this is a pretty clear indication that we are not just going to sit while we have this review with the provinces; on the contrary, we have shown a very clear determination to take action where the need is most obvious.

I might add that we have also asked for an amendment of the Canada Pension Plan, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has pointed out, which will also increase benefits to people in need in this country. Therefore, the argument that no speedy action will be taken while we are going ahead with this review seems to me to have no foundation in this particular case.

As to the other argument about contributions by the federal government to the Canada Assistance Plan, we are already contributing 50 per cent in this field and there is no assurance that a greater contribution on the part of the federal government would necessarily mean any greater payment to certain individuals in a particular province. As a matter of fact, when one looks at the figures province by province, one realizes that some of the lower income provinces are more generous than other more wealthy provinces. Also, much depends on the determination of provincial governments to pay their own share and to help people in need.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.