

Family Allowances Act, 1973

Bill C-133 which deals with pensions of superannuated civil servants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Before I recognize the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), it has been indicated to the Chair the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Cosgrove) has requested permission to revert to motions.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

TABLING OF NOTICE

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I should like to draw to the attention of the House that I rose earlier today to table a motion to amend the Income Tax Act. The Table officers have brought it to my attention that the motion should have included the Income Tax Act Application Rules, 1971.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FAMILY ALLOWANCES ACT, 1973

MEASURE TO LIMIT INDEXATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Miss Bégin that Bill C-132, to amend the Family Allowances Act, 1973, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) had a question.

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) had the courtesy to let me ask a question. I shall do so to try to correct some important misinformation that she gave without permitting me to reply. This is a very simple question and I would like her to answer it.

The measure under discussion is a Bill capping, through six and five, the Family Allowances of those who do not really need them. Were the Bills on pensions not included in the budget at the end of June? The Hon. Member has the date of my broadcast; I do not because I did not know that she would bring this up today. Did I not speak on "Canada A.M." at the end of October or November, in which case I was absolutely right in what I said?

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the Minister made the following statement:

All social programs, that means in particular pensions and all benefits for children, will remain the way they are.

Miss Bégin: When? I ask you, When?

Miss MacDonald: The statement was made on November 4. These Bills were introduced and put on the Order Paper at that time, so I ask the Minister how she could make the statement when she had bills on the Order Paper which were going to change the Family Allowance and the old age pension?

Miss Bégin: I am sorry, I am waiting for the answer to my first question. Were these measures not announced clearly in the budget at the end of June? Does the Hon. Member not know what a budget is?

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to oppose Bill C-132. This Bill, to amend the Family Allowances Program, is another imposition by the Government of six and five restraint. In Bill C-125 last spring, the Government attacked workers with the six and five restraint. Recently we debated Bill C-131, an attack on senior citizens with its restraint on the old age pension. Bill C-132 is an attack on Canada's children, our most important national resource. It is an attack on families who are suffering from the highest unemployment rate in our history. They need every cent of their monthly Family Allowance cheques to pay the extra cost of clothing and feeding their children.

The Bill is also a slap in the face for women. I am sorry that the Minister is not in the House at the moment to listen to this point. The Family Allowance cheque is sometimes the only cheque that many women in Canada receive in their own name. This has great significance, even for mothers in high income families.

Even more harmful from the point of view of this Party—and I did not hear the previous speaker refer to this matter—is the fact that this Bill, following upon Bill C-131 which capped indexing and eroded the universal old age pension, is a deliberate Liberal strategy to erode Canada's universal social security system, in this case Family Allowances.

The Minister denied this but then she quickly said that the purpose of the Bill was to gear the Family Allowance to lower income people. Of course, we are in favour of adequate support for low income people, but we are also in favour of a universal Family Allowance.

● (1620)

I strongly suspect the motives of the Government in this matter. The basic monthly Family Allowance has been a right in Canada since 1945 when, as a result of CCF pressure, it was first introduced in the House. It is not something that can be taken away at the whim of an uncaring Liberal Government or, for that matter, a Tory Government. The federal Government, by reducing the cost of living on Family Allowance