

Family Allowance Act

be brief because I know that other members have something very important to say on the motion moved by the hon. member for Compton (Mr. Latulippe).

As I always do, I have listened closely to his speech delivered with the impassioned spirit which always impresses the House. His determination to conquer straight off and to revolutionize the whole modern society of our time at one swoop does him credit. The member is very honest, very nice and pleasant, comes from a good family, is a shrewd businessman, but when he makes a speech like the one we have just heard, especially on the theories that he has outlined, I wonder if he is serious, because he knows very well that what he said might possibly apply in a society without any inequalities.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) claims that unless inequalities are removed, there will be problems. That is obvious, because we cannot all be equal. There shall always be more intelligent, more successful people. Short of living in an ideal society, it would be absolutely impossible to achieve this. Socialist and communist states have tried to achieve it, but they have failed.

The hon. member would have us increase allowances by \$1 a day. That is the theory that he would have us consider.

The hon. member referred to capitalists and that is why I say again that it is impossible to achieve equality among citizens. There always will be rich and poor people. It is not because needy persons are more stupid than the rich. It is because they cannot improve their lot in their environment. In my opinion, the government must play a suppletory part. Basing ourselves on that theory, we must admit that the rich people must help those of slender means, not to make them richer, but to enable them to lead a normal life and to become first class citizens.

The member is well-intentioned, but his proposals are impractical, except in an ideal society. But if we were living in an ideal society where everyone would be honest and enjoy the same standard of living, jails, schools and Parliament would be useless. In fact, as long as there is people on earth, some will suffer, there will be happy people, poor ones, rich ones and dishonest ones. In a word, there will be all kinds of people.

That is why any good society adopts democracy, because it allows it to make a choice which, in this case, consists in taking from some people to give to others in order to make everybody happy.

That is all I had to say. I believe the hon. members who will speak after me will be able to give figures to support what I have just said. But it would be unthinkable for a self-respecting society to resort to such solutions, particularly to help children who expect so much from politicians!

I hope that when they read our speeches, they will at least be able to say that government members could submit significant data. A close study of the notice of motion now before us makes one realize that it would be practically inconceivable to adopt it.

• (4:30 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to make a few brief comments on the motion put before the House this afternoon by the hon. member for Compton (Mr. Latulippe). In many ways it is a very fitting day to have this private member's motion before the House because we have been debating social security, including the guaranteed income supplement, and his motion refers to an improvement in the family allowance program.

I congratulate the hon. member for being so persistent with this motion. He mentioned that for the past eight years, since 1962 I think, he has been placing this motion before the House and debating it each year, and today he was good enough to go through all the details of the ideas and theories which he has developed over those years. I do not think the hon. member should be too disappointed, because on reading the white paper on social security we find that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) proposes to bring in a new family income supplement plan on April 1 next, which will in effect provide the equivalent family allowance of \$16 per month per child to families earning up to \$10,000 a year.

The hon. member is proposing a family allowance of a dollar a day per child, which is about \$30 a month, so we are almost half way to meeting his proposal. However, to implement his proposal immediately, a quick calculation shows that if it were to be a universal program it would cost something like \$2.7 billion. At present, family allowances cost something like \$560 million and with the increase proposed by the minister I understand the cost will be \$660 million. Therefore, a tremendous cost would be involved if we were to implement the hon. member's plan.

Someone recently carried out a study on the cost of implementing a guaranteed annual wage with the floor being the 1967 poverty line. Of course, we have had much inflation since 1967 in the Canadian economy and the poverty line established in 1967 by the Economic Council of Canada is out of date. But even to implement a guaranteed annual income at the 1967 poverty line would cost something like \$2 billion in addition to our present social welfare program.

I would like to take a moment or two to look at the other end of the spectrum. This afternoon the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) said his party advocated setting up a universal old age pension of \$150 a month across the board and without a means test. I asked him what the cost would be and he was not able to supply it. Since then I have ascertained that there are 1,670,639 people over 65 years of age in Canada, and if you multiply that number by \$1,800 you get a figure of slightly over \$3 billion. Of course, many people are already receiving old age assistance and the old age supplement and this amount would have to be subtracted from that figure. Therefore we are talking about an additional \$1 billion or \$2 billion. These programs are very costly if they are universal. If the proposal of the