

Family Allowances

poor family. This is not a question of charity, but entitlement.

That is why allowances must remain universal. Thus, a lot is being saved at the administrative level because the allowances require only a distribution office and the production of a child's birth certificate.

On the other hand, if we had a selective allowances program, this would require an army of more than 4,000 inspectors to check on families in order to establish the age of the child and his parents resources, which would eat up perhaps one third of the money.

We are fed up with red tape. And at the present rate, particularly these past four or five years, there will soon be a whole army of bureaucrats. Why? Because certain selective laws require investigations and more investigations, as is the case for the Old Age Security Act and the former legislation on family allowances. And Quebec will soon propose \$12 or \$20 monthly allowances related to the degree of poverty or affluence of the parents. That is a game to which I object, and to which I will continue to object.

The minister has been firm today: he has introduced this bill containing only five clauses, but which has its merits. Allowances will at least have been increased to \$12. The minister has decided to increase them later on to \$20. Let him do it, but on the condition that they become universal. And when the matter of selectivity will be raised, let him object, for I repeat that the payment of family allowances is a right of the child and not an act of charity to the parents.

Once again I give the minister the assurance of our support every time that he will introduce legislation along those lines. And I wish with all my heart that in January the minister will submit another bill increasing allowances to \$20 a month for all children. The minister has implied that this allowance will be subject to income tax. That is another matter, but all that we ask at first is that, whether it be of \$20 or \$25, as he determines, it retain its universal aspect, and I can assure the minister that on this point, he will get the support of 90 per cent of the population.

Once again, I congratulate the minister and assure him that we shall gladly support this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander: My only fear about this bill concerns the type of machinery which the minister and his department have in position. I ask the minister to assure hon. members and the people of Canada that the cheques containing the increase will go out on October 1. Can we have that assurance? Perhaps the minister has covered this matter already. However, I would point out, with respect to the income tax legislation, that I still receive letters from people asking why it is taking so long to process their returns. I hope the minister can be definite in his answer in order to give some hope to those who have been suffering as a result of the high cost of living.

Mr. Lalonde: First of all, Mr. Chairman, I would like to tell the hon. member for Hamilton West that I am quite happy that there seems to have been a change of heart in

[Mr. Gauthier (Roberval).]

the official opposition between last night and this afternoon, and if the opposition—

Mr. Alexander: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I resent the minister returning to partisan tactics once again. The hon. member for Hillsborough put our position admirably. I asked the minister a simple question and he, after consulting his officials, surely can answer it. We do not need all this nonsense about changing position and that sort of thing. Just let him answer the question.

● (1610)

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, anyone bothering to read the record will soon see who has indulged in partisanship in the last three days in this House. I can only answer the question in a hypothetical way because, as was shown clearly yesterday, I am in the hands of the official opposition with regard to the adoption of this bill. Yesterday they wanted to talk about it for a long time and today they are willing to proceed quickly with it. I am very pleased about that.

If the bill is passed in the next few days, I have no hesitation in saying that cheques will be issued in October and will include the amount that is proposed in the bill. Every month family allowance cheques are sent out so that they are received by families on or about the twentieth of the month. So on or about October 20, if parliament approves this bill, every family in Canada will receive for each child a cheque for \$12.

[*Translation*]

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Chairman, I will be brief and I hope the minister can give us an opinion on what I asked yesterday. I urged the minister to give particular attention to the possibility of granting family allowances up to age 21. Since the minister was then in the House, I should not have to repeat the arguments I presented yesterday, concerning all the changes which have taken place in our education system and which, not only, make it possible for children to go to school much longer than 20 or 25 years ago, but also makes it necessary. On the other hand, education costs are much higher than they were and the obligation for children to stay in school all day and have their meal there constitutes, of course, an additional charge for the parents. I wonder, in the context of present day life, if it would not be wise for the government to consider very soon, the possibility of granting family allowances up to the age of 21. The minister could at least give some hope to the population by telling us that he will think about consulting the population about this measure, which I consider to be very reasonable. I would like also to suggest to the minister, unlike my colleague on the right, the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier), who speaks of the universality of family allowances, that a national average be set up. I am very happy to see that the provinces will be able, to the extent where they shall have the right to do so, to give more to those who are in greater need.

I think this bill provides for a just distribution, and I hope that the minister can give some hope to the population concerning the establishment of a program of family allowances up to the age of 21.