

In January 1974, the allowances will be changed once more according to the formula determined in each province. And again in 1974, in each province, family allowances will amount to an average of \$20 per month per child.

[English]

Another notable feature of this interim bill lies in the fact that we will not tax these interim payments. It follows that there is a clear-cut increase for every recipient of the family allowance payments at this time and full benefit accruing to them immediately, with a further net increase in January under the reformed family allowances program. These measures will ensure that the maximum amount of purchasing power is maintained for low and middle-income earners alike.

This legislation, following on the measures proposed for an immediate increase in the OAS and GIS payments with allowance for quarterly escalation, demonstrates the manner in which the government is using its powers and its responsibilities under the two universal direct payment programs as one facet of its whole thrust to combat the effects of inflation which we are all now feeling.

With this package we are determined to ensure the maximum value in purchasing power for the Canadian consumer, child or pensioner, low-income, middle-income or higher income Canadian. But the measures I have outlined today are, as I have said, only an interim step. The government continues working to provide the best form of income security possible, and that is a reduction of the rate of inflation itself. In that light, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all hon. members to join me in seeking swift implementation of these measures.

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, I expected we would have been continuing our discussion on other stages of Bill C-220 and that we might have been able to bring it to its final stage before the afternoon was out. I regret to say that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) who has just spoken did not overextend himself in the courtesy of his notice that we would be moving on to this bill.

● (1550)

When I take part in debate I generally extend to others the courtesy of listening to them; therefore in the present case I did not even have the opportunity to go to my office for my file on family allowances. I had hoped that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) would be responsive to the sentiments expressed in various parts of the House this morning and that we would have moved on to the bill that he was bringing to the baptismal font of this temple of legislative action.

I do not want to begin on a sour note, but I cannot help but notice the difference between this Friday and last Friday. Last Friday it was impossible to find out what, if any, measures would be brought forward on Tuesday; today it seems that all available must be processed this day. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am glad that this bill which emerged only today—one can imagine the length of time that we have been given for reflection upon it—at least is not another FISP bill. For that, we may be profoundly thankful. Not only does it lack

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the inequities of that particular measure but it lacks many of its inexplicabilities, if I may use that inexplicable expression.

I thought the minister adopted a different tone. Apparently he is a different man on Friday than on Tuesday. Tuesday's child was one which leaned hard upon partisanship; today, Friday, he leans on statistics. As I listened to him regale us with the excellence, the magnanimity and the magnitude of this measure I thought of the old saw about the man who drowned in the lake, the average depth of which was one foot. Even without a large staff, statistics can be produced for a given occasion which may be possessed of some appeal.

Since the minister was statistics-bound today, I wonder why he did not tell us what has happened to rents for the people who are raising families in Canada? This would not be such a pleasant item of information. He might also have told us something about the housing situation and the interest rates which are bearing down upon the parents of children. He might have allowed his mind to range as far as the tax on building materials that has been mentioned in this House for many years, and the calls for its removal.

The one "recall" of the earlier performance of the minister is the "You never had it so good" syndrome. Naturally, anyone piloting a piece of legislation through the House wants to make it appear as useful as possible. However, I cannot imagine anyone in a ministerial position, in a country in the economic condition of this one, not admitting the gravity of the situation and the inadequacy of the actions of the government over the years.

There are thousands of Canadians, Mr. Speaker, who never had it so hard. We hear from them, we see them in the supermarkets and on the streets. We get letters from them in our mailboxes on Parliament Hill. These people know: they do not have to wait for the monthly emanation from Statistics Canada to be able to document the problems they are having in providing the needs of a growing family. The cost of education, clothing, housing and also of transportation—all those daily needs are rising in cost, inexorably.

I spoke about family allowances when I last dealt with this measure and how, as an income transfer, it related to the days of Mackenzie King. I mentioned how little has been accomplished over the years in terms of an income transfer to people with families. If I said that the \$20 figure was not one which would enable the minister to take a bow for exceptional generosity, I can now say clearly and quickly—even without having had the knowledge that he would be bringing in the bill—that this is not a grand, sweeping gesture of magnanimity. It is not an administrative measure which will relieve the people of Canada of the problems they are facing—problems of indifference from a government, incapacity from a government and maladministration from a government.

I wonder what parents think when they see and hear that vocal lady who is now the watchdog of prices and who tells them not to buy if prices are too high. What comfort! What callous indifference in the face of gripping and growing human need! This morning I asked, rhetorically, why the interim measure had to be lower than the long-range one. I listened with the utmost care to the minister's statement and I still do not understand why. I