

Family Allowances Act

Ms. Copps: The Member says I do not know what I am talking about. I believe that Canadians understand what rancid tuna is, and if we have to bring a can into the House to show them, we will do so.

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Ms. Copps: With regard to the main question, which is family allowances, we are talking about the people who would be most affected by this cut-back. The Government says that \$22 is not a lot for Canadian families. Well, families and single parents who are struggling to raise small children, often surviving on tuna, are being directly assaulted by the Government's anti-family Budget measures. Look at the package. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) has said on numerous occasions that this particular measure will assist poor families.

Let us examine the facts. Let us examine the truth, if it is possible for the Government to put the truth before the Canadian people. The truth speaks volumes about the anti-family legislation that is personified in this family allowance attack. The truth is that as a direct result of the Budget measures introduced by the Wilson-Mulroney Government, the purchasing power of families earning \$15,000 a year will be reduced by almost \$2,000. Almost \$2,000 will be taken from the tax credits, the family allowances, and the tax exemption of families earning \$15,000 a year.

An Hon. Member: We can't hear you.

Ms. Copps: I am sorry if the Member finds it difficult to hear the Opposition speaking out for the women of Canada. I can understand why the Member would not want to hear the truth—

Mr. Andre: No one has difficulty hearing you.

Ms. Copps:—when it comes from the government side of the House, because there are not too many people on the Government side who have stood to fight for women and to save the family allowance cheque which, for some women who are not working outside a home, is the only support they receive from the Government of Canada. I can understand why the Member would support his friends from Bay Street with a \$.5 capital gains write-off and a \$1 billion bail-out for the banks, yet would wash his hands of the \$20 that the Government has been sending out to families who are at the low end of the income scale.

I wish the people of Canada understood now what they will understand from a fiscal point of view when the final impact of this sneaky and insidious Budget is felt. An average family of four, earning the average Canadian income, is going to lose almost \$4,000 when the cumulative effects of this Budget are felt. That includes the deindexation, the cut-back on family allowances, and the reduction in the child tax credit as well as the insidious tax on over 2,000 health supplies which continues to be imposed by the Government.

I can understand why Members on the Government side of the House are not speaking to this legislation. It is quite clear

that they are fighting for Bay Street, for the banks, for the billion dollar bail-outs, and for the tuna companies which want to have the standards lowered, but they are not fighting for the ordinary Canadian. I believe that Members on the Government side of the House have heard from their constituents, and women in particular, who do not necessarily receive any income from other sources. They have looked to the Government for leadership and follow-through on its promise to home-makers, which we have not seen materialize. Those women are looking to the Government to live up to its promise of the so-called economic partnership between men and women that the Prime Minister spoke about in his very first statement in the House of Commons.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Sad to say, we do not see any leadership among Progressive Conservatives with respect to programs concerning women. Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that a great many women who are housebound are in no position to make personal representations to the Government to seek renewed justice in terms of family allowances. So it is up to us in the Opposition parties to show the Government how strongly opposed the people are to the decision of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and particularly the decision of the Prime Minister to slash \$2,000 off the purchasing power of the poorest and most underprivileged families in Canada. I am talking about families of four persons who earn \$15,000 on average. Those are not rich people. Bankers do not need the protection of the House of Commons any more than the big tuna industry, but it quite obvious that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) is prepared to speak up for companies and apparently could not care less about the health of thousands of Canadian men and women. The Government changed, quite clearly, in its approach concerning the promises made to the Canadian people.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I was a guest on a radio program and a man phoned from Kingston and said over the air—

[*English*]

The gentleman on this radio show said that he was conned in the last election. He voted Conservative. He said he was conned because he believed the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Government when they said that universality is a sacred trust. People believed the Prime Minister when, in his first statement in the House, he said that one of his greatest priorities was the economic integrity of women in this country. They believed him when he said that the support of the family was going to be a cornerstone of the politics of the Conservative Government. Unfortunately, we have seen that the Prime Minister has put the word "con" back into the Conservative Party.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare has abandoned his responsibilities to women and children in this coun-