

Family Allowances

● (1612)

The fifth point referred to SIN, which is something I discussed with the hon. member privately. The hon. member wants to know where it is going to stop. He referred to the eventual abuses of the use of SIN. Apparently some ambiguity concerning this infiltrated our debates in the last weeks. The hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar several times indicated that he was not pleased with some of the things we were going to do. We are going to implement a new child tax credit, but by my reading of the press I conclude that his fears were not associated with that. He was concerned about the penalty on cashing bonds or other financial assets without providing social insurance numbers to the taxation people.

It is a requirement of the Income Tax Act that social insurance numbers be provided. Sections 234 and 237 provide for that requirement, and for the penalty. The hon. member referred to the penalty clause which is contained in a law passed by the House.

The child tax credit provision is a use of the taxation system. In that system people are required to obtain social insurance numbers by law. Mothers who do not have social insurance numbers will be invited to apply for one. We in the department have observed that a great number of mothers who have submitted social insurance numbers have given us their husbands' numbers. Possibly they have done so because of the practice established by credit card companies where wives use their husbands' credit cards. We invite people who do not have social insurance numbers to apply for them. They can go to post offices to pick up application forms which must be filled out.

The sixth point raised a question regarding Inuit and Indian children. We have not had an opportunity to clarify that yet. Clearly these children have the same rights as other Canadian children. Therefore they will receive, through their mothers, the new child tax credit. One must remember that the child tax credit uses the taxation system, under which Indians do not file. In this case it was clearly decided that Indian mothers will apply in the same manner as other Canadian mothers and will receive the credit for their children.

Some benefits and tax privileges are prorated in the tax system. Others are given as per status on December 31 of the tax year. The child tax credit will go to children who are below 18 years of age as of December 31 of the tax year for which people are filing.

The last point is a very important one. It concerns the needed information campaign to make sure all eligible mothers apply for and receive the benefit. Of course this applies more to mothers on welfare and working mothers of poor families who do not pay taxes, or are in no way related to the tax system. There are hundreds of thousands of such people. We are making maximum use of cheque inserts. There was one in October. There will be one in December and in January, together with the one-page new form. Also there will be one in February. In addition, we intend to have a special mailing to all family allowance recipients who do not have social insur-

ance numbers. This special mailing will instruct them on how to receive their numbers.

I have written to all my provincial colleagues asking for their assistance in permitting social workers or professional field staff to assist all the people they meet in their daily work. Since most of these people are on social assistance programs, they will be provided with the required assistance in filling out forms. I would welcome suggestions from members of the House as to using voluntary organizations which are connected with women. I am referring to such organizations as those fighting poverty and to other women's organizations. They could be of assistance in the establishment of an information program. Also we are training our own field staff in every income security office in the country. In addition to their training on GIS, they will be trained to assist mothers and parents in general in filling out forms in January, February and March. I stress the importance of getting the mothers, particularly of families in need, to apply for this program.

Mr. McGrath: My question arises out of those posed by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar, but first I should like to clear up a misconception which was placed on the record by the Minister of National Health and Welfare when I raised a point of order. She accused us of playing games with this bill. I am sure she was implying that some kind of a filibuster was taking place. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The record will show that we first received this bill in committee of the whole on Thursday, November 2. On that occasion we had two hours to deal with it. On Friday, November 3, we were provided with one hour and 40 minutes in which to debate this bill. Yesterday, because of the procedural debate brought on by the government House leader, we were provided with approximately 30 minutes. Thus, we have spent a total of four hours on this very important bill, which is the equivalent of less than one day. The minister should not throw out irresponsible accusations of that kind. If anyone is playing games, certainly it is the government, as evidenced by the procedural argument of the government House leader yesterday and the failure of the Minister of Finance to be present in committee to answer questions on this bill for which he has responsibility.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: The minister made replies to my colleague respecting no formal agreement or undertaking by the provinces regarding this bill, and that perhaps it stands a chance of being discounted respecting social welfare payments paid by the provinces.

I should like to refer to the case of my own province. This bill was brought in coincidental with a bill now before the House to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act. That will mean a number of people in the Atlantic provinces and other parts of the country who heretofore would qualify for unemployment insurance, will now have to fall back on the overtaxed welfare agencies of our provinces and cities. The absence of a formal agreement or undertaking to deduct the amount of