

not provinces? And isn't it about time that the minister called an emergency conference to deal with this program? This is a very critical matter.

I know that the minister is sincere in his attempts to relieve the poverty that exists in our supposedly great nation, but we are overlooking the plight of too many of our citizens. We can deal in some measure with our senior citizens, because they come within our jurisdiction when they reach 65, and thank God we have reached the stage where two people over 65 can get \$325 a month. Under the government's new proposals they will get a little more. But what do we do with people who are 64 years of age? They can be sick or maimed and suffering under the worst circumstances, but our laws allow us to give them only \$140 per month. The minister said in one of his speeches that the level of social assistance which is given to the poor of the provinces is a national disgrace. How true that is.

Another serious problem that we, as responsible parliamentarians, should be dealing with is that of the working poor. Once again I will give examples from my own province. At the present moment, a group of hospital workers in Newfoundland is striking for higher wages. Nobody wants strikes, particularly in essential services, least of all the workers themselves; but how are they to cope with the rising costs of food, shelter, oil and other necessities of life? One of these employees gets the grand sum of \$55 per week, in this day and age; another gets \$420 per month after 20 years of service; another gets \$312 per month after having worked for nine years. They have to bring up families. Is it fair to allow that situation to exist in our country?

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree that the increase in family allowances will help these people a little bit. I realize also that this is a provincial matter. But surely the federal government must face up to the disparities in our country, show some leadership and live up to the pledge of the Prime Minister, who stated in the throne speech five years ago that this government was committed to providing a decent quality of life to all Canadians, in all provinces, wherever they may live.

I think the minister should be complimented for bringing in this measure to increase family allowances; however, the problems of our youth are much broader. I hope the minister will consider other programs during the three to five years it will take to introduce social security program for Canadians. More effort must be directed towards youth development. Children in this day and age are growing up undernourished, so they will be unable to cope with society in later years because of that fact.

Let me read one more note from my mail, Mr. Speaker, on the subject of the nutrition of our Canadian children. I shall quote in part from a letter from a school board supervisor in my district. I will read the following extract:

It can be stated with a reasonable degree of certainty that the ability to learn is closely related to nutrition; thus we find that often as not the child suffering from malnutrition will either find himself in a 'slow' or special education class. It is obvious that under such conditions the school is not only confronted with instituting special programs in an attempt to remedy the problem but the child's interest in school diminishes to the point that it is likely he will drop out as soon as possible.

Family Allowances

The partial solution to the problem is the instituting of diet supplementary programs in the schools, because it is in the school that the problem can be discovered more readily. The difficulty is, of course, that funds are not available for this kind of program. Once again, when I bring this problem to the minister's attention, it will become a provincial problem because education comes within provincial jurisdiction. At the same time, these children are suffering from inadequate diets and lack of proper nutrition.

The school board to which I referred attempted to institute a program involving eight schools. Under it 200 children were supplied with soup, crackers and hot chocolate and, in conjunction with this program, special education classes were conducted. It is obvious that we are not in a position to serve all the children but can take care of only the most pressing cases. Of course, the ideal situation would be to make a similar type of program available to all children. I am sure we could find, even under the British North America Act, a way to bring such a program under the Department of National Health and Welfare which would ensure that children would develop properly in body as well as in mind.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Marshall: Mr. Speaker, in the interest of passing this bill I will refrain from further remarks. I shall only say to the minister, bring the bill before the House, let us get it through and let us get on with the job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I will make a few brief remarks on the bill before us which I think is quite important in view of the present circumstances.

I listened carefully to some speeches. I know the minister has often been asked why he was not making available allowances of \$20 or \$25 and why he was not doing so immediately?

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Because the minister is too slow.

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, I will limit my remarks to the bill and try to make a suggestion to the minister which I think deals with the problems with which we are faced.

As all other hon. members, I will be pleased to support a legislation which mathematically is very interesting, and I also feel that the increase in allowances to \$12 as of October 1 will be quite welcomed by all mothers and, of course, their children.

I would like especially to ask the minister to give particular attention to the age of eligibility. We know quite well that when family allowances came into being, the age of those who completed their education was a lot closer to 16 or 18 than today.

We also know the important changes that took place in the field of education. By that, I mean—I have four children, so I know what I am talking about—that today, because of the deep changes made in our education systems, children must have lunch at school and spend a lot more money than it used to be.