

What is the Minister asking a family with two children and an income of \$26,000 to sacrifice? Under Bill C-132 which we are looking at today and its related budget measures, these families will be asked to sacrifice \$8 during the same period. Moreover, the maximum sacrifice any family will be asked to make, no matter how high its income, will be \$54 during the period that this Bill is in effect.

What a comparison of the impact of these Bills shows, Mr. Speaker, is that some families with children in Canada will be slightly better off in 1983, assuming the one-year increase in Child Tax Credit. Yet no senior citizen will be any better off than they are now, and this includes the 360,000 who have no income other than Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, because there are no off-setting measures for those at the lowest income levels as there are in the case of families with children. One is given a special benefit, the other is not. In addition, the 1.2 million senior citizens who do not receive the income supplement will be considerably worse off. That is the difference in the way this Government is approaching these two Bills. It simply will not accord the same treatment to the senior citizens of this country that it does to families with children.

I ask the Minister, where is the equity there? How can the Minister justify this disparity? The answer, surely, Mr. Speaker, is that she cannot. In fact, she does not even try. What the Government does is ignore the difference in the way that it is imposing the six and five restraint program. It is pretending that no differences exist. And I may say the Government is becoming quite good at that because it has had lots of practice at that kind of hypocrisy.

The Government claimed earlier this year that it was not reducing its commitment to medicare and post-secondary education. At the same time, its own estimates showed that almost half a billion dollars less was being spent for these purposes, but it chooses to ignore that.

● (1610)

Take another case. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) claimed several times recently in this House that negotiations were proceeding with the Provinces on a new Canada health act.

Yesterday, the November 30 issue of the respected trade newspaper, *The Medical Post*, was sent to every Member of Parliament. It quoted several provincial Ministers of Health to the effect that there had been no negotiations on the new Canada health act since last September, and further quoted the federal Minister's own press secretary, Bernard Dozier, as saying: "At the moment there are no actual physical discussions going on between Ottawa and the Provinces".

The point I want to make is that what they say and what they do bear little resemblance to each other. Nowhere was this more evident than in a statement specifically related to this Bill, a comment which the Minister of National Health

Family Allowances Act, 1973

and Welfare made in an interview on "Canada A.M." on November 4, when she said:

All social programs, that means in particular pensions and all benefits for children, will remain the way they are.

Miss Bégin: That is true.

Miss MacDonald: The Minister says that that is true. Bill C-131, which deals with pensions, Bill C-132, which deals with Family Allowances, and Bill C-133, which also deals with pensions, are on the Order Paper. What are they doing there if the Minister says that benefits for children and pensions will remain as they are?

Miss Bégin: They will.

Miss MacDonald: The Minister says they will. These Bills cut those programs back. Is anyone really trying to pretend that these three Bills do not affect pensions and benefits for children? Is the Minister really saying that they will have no effect on those programs?

[*Translation*]

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The Hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) rises on a point of order.

Miss Bégin: Would the Hon. Member accept a question?

[*English*]

Miss MacDonald: When I am through with my speech, certainly I will accept a question from the Minister and I will have her statement right here in order to answer it, Mr. Speaker.

I really want to pose the question to her, after having made that statement, is she really trying to pretend that these Bills do not have any effect on pensions or on Family Allowances? The Bill before us is entitled "an Act to amend the Family Allowances Act, 1973". Perhaps we are to take the Minister's statement as a pledge that there would be no further changes. Perhaps that is what she wants to explain. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that the Government is backing out of its obligation—wherever it can conjure up the ghost of a pretext for doing so.

With the enormous deficits we now face, the need for restraint in expenditures is, of course, clear. What is inexcusable, however, is the series of Bills before us with these ill-conceived, ad hoc measures for restraint. These Bills ignore such basic principles—to which I thought the Minister was committed—as contractual obligations, the distinction between essential and non-essential expenditures, and the necessity to graduate the levels of sacrifice required from different income groups. The Bills ignore these principles.

These are the principles this Party has consistently fought for in responding to the Government's restraint program. I would say to the Minister that we will continue to fight for these principles through all stages of this Bill and through all stages of Bill C-131, which deals with old age pensions, and