

Family Allowances Act

the part of government at all, to give money to parents for any purpose without its being earned. Finally, he impressed on the people of this country that they had a duty to the children and future of the nation, just as much as they had a duty to grant a pension to the people of the country who had passed their ability to earn. The idea of giving money to young families was an unheard-of thing. The subject was not brought up on the floor of the house or any other place except there. It was an idea that originated right in that place.

As a result the Liberal party, which was in power at the time, passed the family allowances bill, so that the people of this country now have something that very few countries in the world have. The money that is paying for this measure is coming out of the taxpayers. We are a step in advance of practically every country in this world by reason of this legislation. Like the hon. member, I feel that all this social legislation should be advanced just as quickly as it is possible to advance it. I feel also, and very strongly, that there are countries in the world that have gone overboard for social legislation. They have brought themselves into a position where they are financially embarrassed by the amount of money they are paying out in social legislation. We must remember that if the economy of this country is working at top speed, it can produce jobs which enable the heads of families to make money to raise their children.

I recall that during the thirties young people were going together for years and years, but were unable to get married and raise families because they could not get jobs that would pay enough to allow them to do so. Today we find that young people going together can afford to get married while they are young because we have a sound economy which will allow them to get jobs, to go into farming or industry, and thus set up homes. Let us consider a country which would be loaded down by taxes in order to pay for excessive social services. Practically everything that was produced would go to the government, and the government would dole out these various social services like family allowances, medical services and the others. We would find that the economy of the country would become tighter because people could not earn the money they needed.

I feel that family allowances are very important, and I feel that as soon as we can collect enough money from the taxpayers to increase those allowances we should do so. But I believe that our one great aim should be to see that everyone in this country has an opportunity to get a job that will pay enough money to keep a family. Then our

family allowances program, as it goes forward, could supplement the income that the father earned. As I say, I am not greatly opposed to the measure the hon. member has brought forward. I am in favour of family allowances, because I certainly support wholeheartedly the government that conceived them, introduced them and is paying them now. As soon as it is felt that we can afford to increase those allowances, then I shall be in favour of that.

One thing we must remember is that we cannot burden the country by these transfer payments as they are called, to the point where a person who is trying to get ahead and expand his business finds himself under a load of taxes which will not allow him to do that. For that reason I feel we should go carefully. Once again I want to say that I am not opposed to the proposal, but at the moment I feel that we have gone about as far as we can in that particular direction. I believe that our biggest job is to provide the young parent with a good job at an adequate income, and do the other things necessary to keep our economy sound. Whatever we can do, in addition, to give increased family allowances, I feel we should do.

Mr. Ray Thomas (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take about two minutes to speak in support of the motion. The family allowance was introduced to fill a gap in the earning power of many of the family wage earners in this country. At the present time it is insufficient to fill that gap and to serve the purpose for which it was designed. I believe, however, that there are one or two other considerations which the government should take into account at the present time. The first is that, in my opinion, a larger income tax exemption should be allowed for those who are receiving the family allowance. At the present time the exemption is pretty much of a joke. But more important than that point is this one. Before any increase is given, I believe that consideration should first be given to the extension of the age limit beyond 16 for those children who are carrying on with their education. In many cases, among the lower income families, we find that the children have to quit school after 16. As a result of that fact their productive capacity in later life is restricted.

As I say, we agree that the family allowance is inadequate at the present time and we should like to see an increase in it. But at the same time I think that consideration should first be given to those children over the age of 16 who wish to continue their education. What the age limit would be is something I would leave to the Minister of