

though they do not know each other's circumstances. This causes bickering and bitterness, as has happened with the old age supplement. We accepted the principle of universality. It may be a fact that once this minority parliament is long gone and we go through another general election, the most fundamental piece of legislation in its significance to Canadians, in the realm of redistribution of income, will be the family allowance legislation, if we make sure that it is on the books in the new form which maintains the principle of universality. Furthermore, it may mean that minority governments will find it preferable in the future to do away with the stupid and erratic use of supplements to old age pensions and will apply them across the board similar to the principle we have established in the family allowances program.

Canadian families in the lower income brackets, if their income is \$4,000 and there are four children in the family spend up to 32 per cent of their income on food. Families with incomes of \$12,000 spend about 15 per cent of their disposable income on food. So this increase at this time can be of great benefit. As to other measures introduced by the government, although I would like to expand on them I believe they could justifiably be dealt with at another time.

I happened to agree last night with the remarks the minister made to the hon. member for York-Simcoe. The minister was frustrated by the fact that the subject of wheat was brought up in the debate as well as interest rates and other questions related to the cost of living. But I plead with him, in all sincerity, to approach the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board and the Minister of Agriculture and to ask them to make a statement on motions in the House on exactly what kind of program they are putting into effect, where the benefit is to the consumer and where the benefit is to the producer. That matter should be clarified.

I hope the Minister of National Health and Welfare will ask his colleague, who I hope is listening to this debate, to rise in the House and explain those policies so that hon. members do not attempt, as did the hon. member for York-Simcoe and others, to drag into the debate other issues related to the cost of living. If he were to do that, his legislation would go through the House with far greater speed.

In summary, I should like to say that I support this interim measure and look forward to the long-term legislation, which I will also support, to help Canadian families in general and families in the Assiniboia constituency in particular.

**The Deputy Chairman:** The hon. member for Roberval. Is the hon. member for Hamilton West rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Alexander:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I do not wish to enter the debate and make a speech. The hon. member for Hillsborough presented the case of the opposition admirably and without equivocation, hesitation or reservation. All I want to do is ask the minister a question. Could he give me some assurance that the moneys that will be due—

### Family Allowances

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order, please. I thought the hon. member wished to ask a question of the hon. member for Assiniboia. If not, let me point out to him that I had recognized the hon. member for Roberval. I will come back to the hon. member for Hamilton West later.

● (1600)

[Translation]

**Mr. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Chairman, without trying to delay the passage of this bill, I would like to make a few comments before we proceed to the consideration of every clause of the bill.

First, we are satisfied in part with this bill and I say right away that I support its passage. However, I regret that the minister did not introduce the measure he referred to in this House, namely that family allowances would be \$20. However, we will be assured that our children, all children of Canada, until the age of sixteen, will finally have \$12, considering the fact that we have been asking for years that allowances be geared to the cost of living. It is far from being so, but this is still better than nothing.

I congratulate the minister for having maintained the principle of universality as regards the new allowances that will be paid, as stated in the recommendation, after September 30, 1973, in the amount of \$12 for every child of Canada, whatever his parents' means or wealth may be.

Mr. Chairman, we have always spoken in favour of universal laws. We are governed by a national government and we must always try to pass universal and not selective legislation. Selective legislation is always somewhat discriminatory for a given group of people.

We are considering here the child as a member of society and not of a group of people, for instance, who are poorer than others. It always bothers me when I hear about poverty. We must give more to Paul than to Harry because he is poorer; Harry is richer, Paul is less poor. Well, I suggest that this is not how we should distribute our country's income. When a child is entitled to family allowances, he is not entitled to it because he is poorer or richer than someone else but because he is a human being with a national right to a redistribution of national wealth.

It is from that point of view, Mr. Chairman, that I wish to support the minister, because he has upheld the universality concept which our party has always advocated. We are often asked: "What do you do about rich children in comparison with poor children?" Now, such is not the allowance issue nor the bill under consideration.

Indeed, we know perfectly well that the richer parents will compensate for the allowances paid to the poor. However, we consider that the allowances will be paid directly to the children, whatever the parents' means. And it will rest with the parents to do their duty by the state, but we do not have to bother about that, the state will see to it.

When we file income tax returns, the state does not forget it. If it must necessarily forget about the poor, it surely does not forget the more affluent and at this point, the head of the family should consider family allowances as a child's right. We are not necessarily giving charity to a child. When I hear about selectivity, it sounds like they were giving allowances because a child belongs to a very