

certain issues such as unemployment insurance changes—and has taken the process seriously. I hope that she will be able to reach the other Ministers in the Government and persuade them to take the commitment to real consultation as seriously. I believe it represented an interesting new initiative on the part of the Government. Initiatives are only as good as the degree to which they are carried through.

With respect to family allowances, however, all six organizations that are part of the social policy reform group have recognized that consultation as a sham. It is a sham because at no point in that process of consultation did any one of these groups concerned with social policy and the social welfare of families and children in this country, or indeed any other group representing women, children or people interested in the social policy in the country, suggest to the Government that it should effectively cut the value of family allowances by 3 per cent year.

My colleague, the Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) was a member of that committee. She sat and listened to the representations made throughout that set of hearings and she certainly heard no one come before that committee to recommend a real cut-back of 3 per cent in the value of the family allowance. That is because family allowance is a critically important ingredient in the household budget of very many families across the country. These include families led by mothers in single parent situations and families characterized by low incomes. The amount of money received from family allowance is crucial to make ends meet within family budgets.

Therefore, I finish my contribution to this crucial debate with a plea to the Government. First, it is a plea to take its consultation process seriously in the future, unlike this case, and second, to request that it look at what family allowances are actually doing—transferring income from the childless to those who bear the responsibility for the future generations in this country. I ask that the Government cease this attack on the children of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Fontaine (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to speak in this debate on family allowance. First of all, I must say I am somewhat surprised at seeing the Opposition trying to delay the passage of this legislation. I get the impression it has forgotten that from 1974 to 1984, it promoted measures to cut back social programs by 50 per cent. In 1976, the same Opposition extended indexation for one year. In 1978, that same Opposition brought about cutbacks in family allowances from \$25 to \$20 per month per child, it reduced and finally eliminated the \$50 per child tax reduction then in effect and reduced the exemption for children of 16 and 17, and finally, in 1982, that same Opposition capped indexation of family allowances at 6 and 5 per cent respectively, for 1983-84.

Their attitude is therefore surprising, to say the least, and one wonders why they now want to postpone the passage of

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this measure for six months. Mr. Speaker, I suppose it is to give them another chance, as the demagogues they are, to alarm Canadians without telling the whole story, to make people panic and to prolong the debate and waste the time of the House for no good reason. I would therefore ask the Opposition to be a little less partisan and a little more supportive of the legislative process.

To achieve social justice, this Government wants to realign assistance programs for families with children, the emphasis being on the neediest families. We could always help more, we could always cut back more. When the Opposition was in power, although its avowed purpose was to redistribute the wealth of this country, it was actually redistributing its debts. In so doing, it has now put us in a position where we owe \$200 billion. This year, the deficit will be more than \$35 billion, and we must consider that our measures must help the neediest families and they must also have an economic impact. That is why we are proposing this Bill.

The Opposition should realize that the best way to help our families is not by giving the money borrowed by a Government that is getting deeper and deeper into debt. The best way to help Canadian families is to reduce unemployment and give jobs to the mothers and fathers of those families.

Some 300,000 new jobs have been created over the past year. That is a positive accomplishment which is the result of our administration. The reduction in interest rates is also contributing to our job creation efforts by encouraging new investments. This is the way to help Canadian families.

Our various Ministers have indicated clearly that they were there to help Canadian families through economy-oriented measures.

The Wilson budget mentioned for instance the loans to small businesses and partnerships which will also help promote small businesses.

There have been changes proposed to the use of RRSPs. These changes are likely to have a major impact on the development of small and medium-size businesses, because the self-administered REERs had been previously directed towards national trusts companies and, through them, channelled to every large multinational or national entities, with the result that the capital and the investor were miles apart. Thanks to the Wilson budget, they will be brought closer together, so that larger amounts of capital will be made available to small and medium-size businesses within our respective communities.

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That is the way our Government is planning to help Canadian families much more than by increasing by a few dollars the family allowances. In other words, we are not going to give them a fish, but we are going to teach our businessmen and families how to fish.