

Family Allowances

family allowance. However, my experience with newspapers leads me to believe that the headline is important, and not the third paragraph. Nevertheless, one might say that the implication is left that it is the provincial government, which did not tax, which is spending.

Speaking as one who represents an area where income is low, where opportunities for employment are still limited and where school and health services are still modest, I rejoice that Bill C-211 is before this House and I congratulate the minister for bringing it forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, in intervening in this debate on second reading, I look around me and notice that benches are empty; I can conclude, with the help of experience, that the quality of the bill seems to be inversely proportional to the number of hon. members present to hear its merits praised or its shortcomings criticized.

I think that the government leader was perhaps right when he suggested at the last conference of Commonwealth parliamentarians that it would be a good thing for democracy to have television cameras installed in the House of Commons to inform the Canadian people of the behaviour of hon. members.

Mr. Speaker, we have an excellent bill before us, about which we already talked intelligently and wisely. My colleague from Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), we know it, with a deep and very accurate understanding of the problems of Canadian society, could express in an exquisite language the attitude of the official opposition towards this bill.

I shall only have to recall some words of the hon. member for Hillsborough, and notably those which are recorded on page 6871 of *Hansard* where he really puts again in its context the bill we are to pass and where he indicates why, if in some respects this bill appears relevant, it is insufficient and it should be completed by other bills within the scope of a much more general scheme.

The hon. member for Hillsborough said, for instance, and I quote:

Why are these ministers so silent, so supine, so superlatively recumbent in face of the cost of living volcano that is shaking Canada's economic structure to its very roots? Is nothing forthcoming to strengthen the economy of this country and to halt the advance of grievous inflation? Certainly the minister, despite his best intentions—and he is not always at his best—cannot cope with this problem. We cannot welfare ourselves into a sound economic society. We cannot capsulize palliatives enough to overcome the economic agony of the Dominion of Canada.

On the other hand, I noticed with surprise and with some dismay, the words of the knowledgeable, respectable and venerable hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I noticed from what he said that the lust for power and the present coalition singularly transformed the unpretentious and humble man he was. He now shows, it seems to me, at least in his language, a certain conceitedness. It is with a smile that all members heard him taking credit for this measure. For the enlightenment of my colleagues, I will now quote the following sentence from the speech of the member for Winnipeg North Centre, that we find on page 6881 of *Hansard*:

[Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent).]

● (1620)

If some of my friends in various parts of the House think that I am being too generous in welcoming this legislation, it must be obvious that the reason we welcome it is that we know we are responsible for it.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that by taking all the credit for this legislation, the distinguished member of the New Democratic Party will also be willing, a little later, to share the responsibility for some weaknesses that may appear in government policy, and as we approach another event in 1974, I hope that the member for Winnipeg North Centre will share the anxiety of the government with which he wants to share the credit today.

Mr. Speaker, we would also be tempted to take a little of the credit for this good measure and to say that if we can do justice at last to Canadian families, it is due to the official opposition. Should we refer to the last election campaign, should it be told once more, we would realize that during the various debates and the various television broadcasts, we too had said that the government should be much more comprehensive and much more generous towards Canadian families, and relying on the respect for this family value, conscious of the burden already born by family heads on account of the raising cost of living, we had undertaken to increase substantially family allowances in co-operation with the provinces and to provide for their escalation on the cost of living if necessary.

Of course, when we spoke about it in October 1972, we were told, in particular by the hon. member for Langelier who was then minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand), that these were silly and unconsidered promises, a thing completely unbelievable. Today, we are pleased to see that the Liberal cabinet makes due apology, realizes that our claims were justified, and as a result of the Official Opposition's claims, and with the co-operation of the provinces, they introduce Bill C-211, a very positive and relevant bill.

Are we not right, Mr. Speaker—and I wish to make a short digression at this point—to ask ourselves questions and wonder why during the last election campaign our Liberal friends have let the people believe that a reform of the family allowances Plan as suggested by us would be but silly promises? Mr. Speaker, it is because of such a change in attitude by political parties and men that the people are growing restless with public life, and it is because of such slights against truth, logic, earnestness and consistency that young people especially are disgusted with politics. It is because of such refusals from outgoing governments, as the refusal during election campaigns to discuss seriously bills that others may suggest, that one of the most striking features of democracy—electoral campaigns—is losing more and more its real significance. Moreover, hon. members will remember the presentation of the budget on February 19. They will remember that at the time the government did not yet believe in the increased needs of the families. In Quebec as elsewhere the people better understand today how we were justified, in the official opposition, for denying our confidence to this government on the occasion of the Speech from the Throne and also of the budget debate.

This required the pressure from the provincial governments which by definition are certainly closer to the