

Family Allowances Act

do not have any kind of suggestion that the people of Canada should trust the Conservative Government to produce a just society. In its scramble to protect its friends at the higher levels of income and to eliminate the deficit, the Government has put itself into such a position that none of the people of Canada at any level will be able to trust it.

What did the Budget do, Mr. Speaker? It was aimed at getting more money from the lower and the middle income groups. Bill C-70, which is before us today, is only one of the steps in the process of getting money out of the lower and middle income groups and, in effect, passing it on to the large corporations and to the shareholders of those corporations who will profit from the situation.

Step number one was obviously the intended reduction in the senior citizen's pensions. That failed. It embarrassed the Government, the Prime Minister and it embarrassed the "Minister of Injustice", as the previous speaker suggested.

Number two is a tax on illness because the Government has established across the board, and is already collecting, a tax on many of the drugs which people need to survive. We have a tax on illness we have a tax on old age, and now we have a tax on children. The Government is attempting to reduce the amount of money which the mothers of Canada are going to need to keep their families going. It is not just the poor people in the country who are going to feel this. Anyone who is having difficulty making ends meet recognizes that as the family allowance goes up with inflation, they have that little extra money which helps them to keep going.

What does this Bill do, Mr. Speaker? First of all, it attacks universality. I know that Members of the Government side will say that it does not attack universality but if we project what is happening in this Bill over a period of time, we find that eventually the family allowance will be very insignificant and the tax credit will be increased, so that we will end up with a program which is selective and not universal. That is the direction in which we are headed. It is obviously part of the government agenda to eliminate universality of social programs. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), when he was commenting on the MacDonald Report suggested that he would like to reopen the case for universality. The defence of the Government on this matter has been to suggest that it will raise the tax credit, and that suggestion is valid and worth-while.

● (1220)

There is no doubt about the direction and the agenda of this Government. It shows up in this Bill and it showed up in the previous suggestion which failed concerning reduction in the senior citizens pensions. It shows that this Government is willing to choose selective payments over universal payments. Even if we did accept the idea of the tax credit as being a replacement, the amount being put into the tax credit is so insignificant that it will not pay for the increases in sales tax. It is not enough. The tax credit is not enough to help a poor mother or a poor family pay for the taxes being imposed by this Government. The Government keeps telling us and hopes

that we believe—but I think the people of Canada know better by now—that it is trying to do these things for the benefit of the family.

The effect of this Bill falls mostly on two groups of people. First, it affects the families. Within the families there are two other groups. The Budget and this action affect the amount of money a person on social welfare will get. In many places, Saskatchewan is probably a good example, the amount of social welfare has been cut so drastically that it is very difficult for a family to get along on what it gets from social welfare.

With the number of unemployed increasing and with the lack of jobs being developed by the Government, more and more people are receiving social welfare. By the third or fourth week of the month, perhaps at the end of the second week if a person is paid every two weeks, people find themselves without enough money to eat well. That is just one group of people who will be affected by this Bill over a long period of time.

We recognize that the immediate effect of the Bill will not be felt. I think the Government is counting on that to make the Bill acceptable. Canadians know what indexing is. Canadians know that this Government committed itself to social programs and said that it would not cut back on universal or social programs.

In one of the Minister's main statements he said that the Government would not cut back social programs to reduce the deficit. When he rose in his place the other day, his first statement was to say that everybody knew the country has a deficit, that we must do something about it, and as a result he was introducing Bill C-70 so the Government would be able to reduce the deficit. That was a direct statement that the Government will reduce the deficit by reducing social services and that it will be done on the backs of children and families, the lower and middle-income groups.

Several months ago, the same Minister guaranteed that any reduction in social programs would not be used to reduce the deficit but would be given to people more in need than others.

What we have is an absolute lack of trust. If the Government thinks that in this approach it will get the support of Canadians, it is badly mistaken.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in my place, but not at all pleased that it is necessary for Members of Parliament, yet again in a period of a few months, to remind this Government of its broken promises, broken commitments and of its abandonment of the principle of sharing the burden of taxation equitably.

It was only a few months ago that many of us stood in our places and suggested to the Government of Canada that it had done something unjust and immoral in attempting to balance the books on the backs of senior citizens, those least able to defend themselves, but here we are again. We are to get a message through that targeting precious dollars predicated on