

Mr. GILLIS: That is correct. The reservation they make with respect to family allowances is that it must not under any circumstances be used by industry as a means of keeping down wages. In considering the broad social plan they accept the principle of family allowances. All we are establishing at this time is the principle and that principle is accepted by the Canadian Congress of Labour and, I think, by any sensible trades union leader in the country who has had an opportunity of studying the matter.

There may be some who expressed premature opinions when the announcement was made a few months ago that this measure was to be brought in. That was done before they had had an opportunity of studying this complicated problem. Consideration had to be given as to how family allowances could be worked in without disturbing other social measures, and what uses and abuses might occur if it were not administered strictly in accordance with the principle that is being established. Many of those people did not have the advantages that we have in the house, and they were not able to clarify their minds as quickly. I did mental handsprings in connection with this measure before I definitely made up my mind as to what I actually wanted. I am trying to express that decision to-night. I do not want the impression left in this house that certain organized groups across the country are disproving this measure. I am reasonably sure that this measure can be taken to any trades union section in Canada and the principles enunciated will be approved.

Is there a need for it? Yes; there is a definite need now for it. Like other hon. members of the house I am receiving many letters. Take the case of a woman whose husband has been incarcerated in the common gaol. There is no income from the breadwinner. If these allowances were available the wife and children of that family would have a measure of protection. Many of us receive letters from women whose husbands have gone A.W.O.L. in the army, navy or some other branch of the service, with a discontinuance of the dependents' allowances. It is a pathetic sight to see a woman, as I have, whose husband overseas is absent without leave—no income, no means of getting the necessities of life, and restrictions in the field of credit. All these make it impossible for the merchant to carry her; so that the family has nowhere to turn, except to charity.

Mr. HOMUTH: But she may not get this.

Mr. GILLIS: Yes, she will, according to my reading of the bill.

Mr. HOMUTH: No.

Mr. GILLIS: This measure will afford relief in a case of that kind.

Then fears are expressed by some that family allowances may be used to depress wages, and that they may militate against workers, in certain circumstances. May I repeat and also support what was said this afternoon by the hon. member for Essex East and by my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I speak as one who on many occasions has paced the picket lines in labour disputes, and I say that this measure is taking the wife and family out of the firing line in cases where workers are forced to strike because of an unreasonable attitude by employers.

I can remember back in 1925 when we had a strike which lasted five months, and involved 12,000 miners in Nova Scotia. During that five months we lived on relief, practically, at eighty cents a week per family. It was pretty hard to get by, but we did it. Had we had this measure at that time it would have been a great asset to the workers of Nova Scotia who were endeavouring to establish what was a reasonable, just and fair wage.

Mr. HOMUTH: Does the hon. member realize that if those men had been earning wages subject to income tax, so that they would not have come under relief, the wives and children would not have got anything when the strike occurred.

Mr. GILLIS: I appreciate that, fully. But when one stops for a moment he must realize that sixty-two per cent of the workers receiving wages and salaries in Canada are getting less than \$1,000 a year.

Mr. HOMUTH: I am talking about your particular case.

Mr. GILLIS: Yes; in our particular case we would have come under this measure at that time, because we were not in the brackets where we would have been paying income tax.

Mr. HOMUTH: Would you now?

Mr. GILLIS: I am safe in saying that now sixty per cent of the workers in the coal mines would not be affected because of the income tax restriction in this particular measure.

In my view this measure cannot be used to depress wages, if the organized workers of Canada keep their trade unions strong, and police this kind of legislation. They will have to do that. No government body, and no one in Ottawa is, in my opinion, going to stop employers in Canada from taking advantage of this kind of legislation. To keep control of that situation organized workers in Canada must strengthen their trade unions, insist upon agreements, police legislation, and keep those