

we feel if we were told "put in an application and come back three years from now"? Wait-listed for a home; wait-listed for a wheelchair; wait-listed for a brace for your stump; wait-listed for opportunity—that is what it means to a great number of people in this country.

● (1522)

I do not have any words of wisdom or easy solutions, but I do suggest that there are some things we might wish to think about again. Perhaps we should remember that it is sometimes wise to have a renewal not only of a program but, indeed, of the philosophy and the purpose behind it. Perhaps we should, therefore, think about a couple of things. This society places great value on three things—independence, usefulness, and making a contribution to society. Those are precisely the goals and desires of the people who dwell in the world of the have-nots. They want independence; they want to be useful; and they want to make a contribution to their society.

Maybe we need to look at other ways in which to approach the social security system. Perhaps we should be looking at new self-help programs. Should we not be looking at the merits of a self-development corporation so that these people can engage in free enterprise? Perhaps we should also find a way to rationalize the programs at the federal level, the provincial level and, as in the city from which I come, at two other levels. Maybe the simple act of just putting them under one roof so that people only have to go to one building would be useful. It would not have to be a government building, Mr. Speaker.

In the city of Toronto local 183 of the Labourers' Union—well known I believe to the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia)—has an excellent set-up. By and large the members in that union are Portuguese and Italian. There used to be a lot of Irishmen on the executive but they have managed to overcome "that difficulty"—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crombie:—so the head of the union is basically Mr. Steppini. If you go to Dupont Street and see local 183 in action, what you will find on four floors, other than a computer, which is interesting to note, is the opportunity for every member of that union to learn driver training; they can get information on local welfare programs; at the next door they can get information about citizenship. Indeed, I have attended a citizenship meeting there where I am sure that the people felt that their citizenship came from the Queen, the Governor-General, and Johnny Steppini!

What is important about my point, Mr. Speaker, is that these people can go to this one place and find two things. First, the services we try to offer are gathered together in one spot. Second, the person they deal with has the range of understanding of what those programs mean and what is available to them. They are treated as a whole person. Nobody goes to a doctor's office and is met by 39 people who all want to take over a part of his body. That comes later!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Family Allowances

Mr. Crombie: People go to a doctor and say; "Look at the whole of me." That is what these people need, too.

While I was preparing my thoughts to make my contribution I thought of my experiences over the past years in government. I am well aware of the difficulties which are met in the administration of programs. Perhaps it is wise to remember there is a vast difference between a good idea and a good idea well administered. There is all the world of difference. It is the good idea well administered which touches the people we intend to help.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crombie: I also wish to say that no one has a monopoly on wanting to help; no individual and no group.

I remember a line from W. B. Yeats which I learned for a different purpose. I think he spoke for all the poor, all the people who would be considered the have-nots, when he wrote:

But I, being poor, have only my dreams; I have spread my dreams under your feet; tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Maybe if we begin by remembering these words, we will serve our people better, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to support the bill before us today which would make some fundamental changes to the family allowances program. When the economy is buoyant it is fairly easy to use our prosperity to develop creative social programs, but in times of restraint it needs great thought and care to come up with some imaginative changes which will put more disposable income in the hands of people who use it most and who need it most, without breaching restraint. The minister is to be congratulated for a set of proposals which increase moneys available to families with young children in low and middle income brackets without increasing the over-all burden on the taxpayer.

If we look at what is available to families with children at the present time by way of state help, apart from the non-direct financial assistance such as medicare, free education and so on, the government moneys available to families with children are, first, the family allowance which has been in place since 1945 and has been indexed since 1974, and which at the present time is \$25.68 a month, or \$308 a year for each child under the age of 18. Second, through the tax system there is the dependant's exemption of \$460 for each dependent child under the age of 16, and \$840 for each dependent child over the age of 16. Then in 1977 there was an additional measure of a reduction in federal tax of \$50 for each child. Both family allowance and the dependant's exemption are indexed to the cost of living.

Faced with the high cost of child rearing and the need which many low income and middle income families were expressing for assistance in this regard, the question was how to reorder the distribution of existing moneys so as to place more into the