

*Family Allowances Act*

It is significant that last year, as an indication of the careful supervision given, there were a little under 39,000 suspensions of family allowance payments for children who were not attending school and for whom family allowance benefits were claimed. The number of prosecutions for illegal receipt of family allowances, fraudulently or for other reasons since the inception of the program in 1945, is under 200, which indicates that, whatever may be said about family allowances, the people of Canada are honest in their attitude towards them.

There are in rare instances people who abuse the measure, but they represent a very small section of the receiving public or receiving children. I had a man say to me the other day, "If you want to see how family allowances are spent go into a beer hall or tavern at the end of the month." I told him what I am telling the house, that that kind of assertion cannot be substantiated in fact. We trace that sort of thing with great minuteness, and we have yet to find any serious case where it could be demonstrated that that was the habit. I am not saying there have not been cases. I am not saying that we are not on the alert and do not find cases of this sort, but what I do say is that they represent a small section of the parents of this country, and it is a tribute to the honour and honesty of Canadian parenthood that I should be able to make this statement.

By the time a child reaches the age of 16, it is estimated that under this measure he has received approximately \$1,188 over that period of years. For some people that may not represent a great sum of money but I could read hundreds of letters—I have a few here today but I am not going to read them—from all sorts of parents, from mothers and fathers and children too in all parts of the country; and I can tell you that the sum of \$1,188 representing the average payment does mean a great deal to the masses of our people. This represents money that comes not from the government but from the people, but as a result of policies conceived by the present government of Canada. While I am on that subject I think I should say—and I am not surprised; I have said it before—that when provincial elections take place, and we have had them recently, knowing human nature as I do I think it is interesting to note that there are some provincial governments that try to urge the people of their provinces to return them to power because they hold themselves out as the authors of the family allowance measure. I need not tell any hon. member of this house that family allowances in Canada are due exclusively to an act passed by the parliament of Canada.

The significance of this measure may be seen from the fact that if the United States were to adopt such a proposal—and there are there strong proponents of the measure, including the man who retires tomorrow from the presidency of the United States—it would cost almost \$3½ billion a year. Our family allowance program was, by implication, compared today with those of some other countries. The three other countries that have family allowance schemes of proportions comparable with our own are Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, but none of these countries provides the same amount of cash benefits provided by the Canadian act.

It is interesting to note the percentage of net national income spent on family allowances in the four countries, including Canada. It will be seen that on this basis of comparison Canada is ahead of Australia and Great Britain, our percentage being 1.86, Australia's 1.44 and Great Britain's .55, while New Zealand is higher than Canada, being 2.62. But taking the relation of family allowances to other social security expenditures—and this is something we must do when we consider a proposal of the magnitude put forward by the hon. member whose motion we are now discussing—in Canada for 1951-52 family allowances represented 25.5 per cent of all social security expenditures. This is a larger proportion than in any of the three countries I have mentioned. It is larger than Australia whose percentage is 23.3, than New Zealand whose percentage is 25.5, and than Great Britain whose percentage is 4.5.

Therefore if we were to adopt the proposal the result would be that in relation to other social security benefits we in Canada would be spending much more on family allowances than on our other social security measures. What one has to do—because there is a limit to the availability of money for these purposes—is consider the effect of any particular proposal on existing measures or upon other proposals or projects that the administration may have in mind.

**Mr. Knowles:** Would the minister permit a question at this point?

**Mr. Martin:** Yes.

**Mr. Knowles:** I wonder if he has information with respect to the four countries he is dealing with as to what percentage the total social security payments are of the gross national product in each case.

**Mr. Martin:** If I may deal with these things in order, I am going to come to that in a rough way, and if I do not do so just mention it to me later. However, I think you will find that I will. It seems to me we have to keep