

Family Allowances Act, 1973

Mr. MacLellan: The Hon. Member can quote any figures he wants, and substantiate them on any scale he wants, but incomes have also increased substantially over the last ten years. There is no suggestion that unemployment has not increased. There are a great many people whose unemployment insurance benefits have expired. This is of grave concern. I would not argue that point.

How we are to define poverty, keeping in mind that the incomes of those who have jobs have increased? I would like the Hon. Member to set forth his parameters; what does he consider the poverty to be, and then we can take it from there. Unfortunately we cannot do that this afternoon, but I would be interested in learning his parameters and comparing them with comparable parameters of the past.

Mr. Anguish: Mr. Speaker, Before posing my question, I would like to say I was surprised by the Hon. Member's earlier remarks when I raised a point of order in an effort to ensure that he was speaking on the correct piece of legislation.

In light of his unfortunate comments about the circumstances which require keeping the six and five alive, and that it has to affect pensioners and some other people in our society, why does he not urge the Government in caucus to extend the six and five program? I could possibly support a six and five program if it covered everyone. What bothers me most about the program, and this has caused most of the time waste in the House of Commons, is that it is directed at specific segments of society. Why do you not encourage your caucus to have the six and five program extended, say, to the bank's profits and other corporate sector profits? Limiting of profits to six and five should be done. The banks have always maintained that they should have high profits because their profits should relate to their assets. If that is true, why does the Government not guarantee a profit of six and five per cent to the farmers of this country? I know many farmers in my constituency, who have over \$500,000 in assets, who, for the past few years, have hardly received any net income at the end of a year. This situation will get worse by doing away with the Crow rate as a result of the Pepin plan. Why does the Government not extend that program to cap profits to some and guarantee profits to others who are not making it in our society right now?

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Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the concern generally on the six and five program. But the six and five program has worked and it is continuing to work. It does apply to everyone as far as income tax indexing is concerned. In this country we have to look at a great deal of unemployment. We have a very high rate of unemployment, much higher than is acceptable to anyone in this House. At a time when we are trying to create jobs and trying to get an economic recovery, how can we say to companies close to bankruptcy that have perhaps used every dollar to pay off debts and are squeezed by increased interest rates on the one hand and reduced sales on the other, that we are going to apply a reduced level of profits, that they will have to accept a reduced level of profits when their profits are low enough as it is? How are we going to

stimulate the economy at this particular time by applying income restraints against these companies? I agree there are companies that do make profits over what one would consider a justified profit, but right now the economy is in great difficulty. We have to try to stimulate the economy, create jobs and get out of this deep recession in which we find ourselves at the present time.

Mr. Kristiansen: Mr. Speaker, my question arises out of the Hon. Member's last remarks. Why is it that he and his Liberal colleagues, who seem to be talking like Conservatives on this issue, when they want to restore confidence and stability to the economy do so by offering extra incentives, extra grants and extra payments to those who have, and forcibly restrain those who, relatively speaking, do not have? How do the Liberals justify that, particularly by creating the kind of insecurity which seems to be the only tangible results of the Bill before us? At least that is the statement made by representatives of the Government. They say it will not make an actual difference to their income, it will just create that feeling of insecurity among them so they have the psychological idea that they are being mobilized to help restore some stability and security to our economy. How do the Liberals justify the two tracks? The Liberals hit at those who do not have and they give more to those who do have.

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Hon. Member, when he accuses us of talking like Tories, that what we are discussing here at the present time is Bill C-132 and the compensation for reduction in the indexation of the Family Allowance by a \$50 Tax Credit over the two-year period.

When the Hon. Member talks about incentives, where was he and his NDP colleagues when the Government presented its November 12 budget and the Government took the criticism from the business community for the regulations which it was putting forward? Where were the NDP then?

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, it is by the Government's decision, of course, that this afternoon we have to continue debating this six and five legislation, in this case to put the cap on Family Allowances. It is the Government's decision that this is much more important than to debate what part Canada will play in the nuclear arms race.

This afternoon the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) tabled the agreement for the framework of testing weapons like the Cruise missile, but refused to make a statement that should have been made. In other words, he refused to allow any opportunity for Members of this House to question or debate a very, very important statement. Therefore, it is with regret that I have to speak not on what has concerned many thousands of Canadians very deeply, not on an issue in which 52 per cent of Canadians are recorded by the Gallup poll as disagreeing with the Government's actions, well in advance of the Government signing that agreement today, but on an issue which, according to Government speakers, is really quite unimportant.