

Family Allowances

Mr. Epp: Has the minister checked with her colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, whether the native people of Canada approve of that move?

Miss Bégin: I have nothing to report, Mr. Chairman. We have no suspicion of a problem there.

Mr. Epp: Can we have an assurance from the minister, before we complete committee of the whole stage of Bill C-10, on the position of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development as to the requirement of status Indians who will apply for this tax credit with regard to whether they will need a social insurance number?

Miss Bégin: Mr. Chairman, I can give that assurance to the committee tonight. In the discussion of and decisions taken on this bill, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was particularly pleased with the fact that it will cover the Indian mother in the way that it will cover other Canadian mothers. I have his whole support, I can assure the committee of that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp: The minister this afternoon spent a fair amount of time hurling a good bit of invective at members on this side, arguing that they should approach the provincial ministers of health with regard to the tax credit to ensure an equivalent amount will not be removed from the provincial welfare payments. She became excited about the possibility of provinces in fact reducing the provincial welfare payout commensurate with the amount of the tax credit. The hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond raised the same spectre—that provinces have done this in the past.

Status people are a direct responsibility of the federal government. I am speaking about those living on reserves and in national territories. I am not speaking about those who have left the reserves. Does she have assurance from the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that the amount of welfare now paid to status people will not be reduced by a commensurate amount of the tax credit?

Miss Bégin: I answered that question earlier tonight, Mr. Chairman. As to the analogy of the provincial governments, I would be pleased if the hon. member for Provencher were bringing me a reply to my letter from the hon. Bud Sherman. I do not have any news from him as to the way he will treat the new child tax credit, but I anticipate the Manitoba government will follow good politics at no cost, except the cost to federal taxpayers, and pass that credit on to the children in the province.

Mr. Epp: Mr. Chairman, I can ask the Manitoba minister of health and social development for that assurance. I am not sure whether the minister needs me as a mediary, but if relations are that bad, I am willing to perform that duty. The same can be said about her reply from Prince Edward Island.

The point I am trying to make with this minister is that while she has made the point about the provinces, this govern-

[Miss Bégin.]

ment has direct responsibility for status people. She cannot blame the provinces for not taking their responsibility. She cannot blame any organization. The buck stops right here with this government. Has the Minister of National Health and Welfare discussed this matter with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development—yes or no? If she has, did she receive the assurance that the amounts payable to native people will not be reduced by the amount individual families will receive pursuant to the tax credit?

● (2132)

Miss Bégin: Mr. Chairman, I said earlier tonight—I thought the hon. member for Provencher was here—that I did write to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development about this very matter.

Mr. Epp: The minister says she wrote to her colleague. We write many letters to this government, but we do not get answers. Did the minister receive an answer relating to this matter?

Miss Bégin: I answered earlier.

Mr. Epp: Is the minister choosing not to answer that question? Has she no answer? Has she not received an answer?

Mr. Railton: You are off the bill.

Mr. McGrath: That is a proper and very important question.

Mr. Epp: I am right on the bill. The point of the matter is that hon. members opposite do not want to answer questions. All this government wants is a rubber stamp for its legislation. I say to the minister and to the hon. member for Welland—especially to the hon. member for Welland—that they have no concern for native people. In fact, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance gave the impression today that in his mind Indians do not count.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I would like to describe that as being a very cheap shot. I am sure the hon. member for Provencher knows that what he says is not the case. I put forward the argument—which I know was not acceptable to the hon. member for Churchill who was posing the question at the time—that getting into the matter of how best to handle welfare payments to Indian children was not perhaps related to any one of the clauses in this bill. However, we did go into further debate, and I believe every question put by the hon. member for Churchill was quite adequately answered.

Mr. Smith (Churchill): No, not yet.

Mr. Martin: I hope the hon. member for Provencher will take back the comment he made relating to my position on Indians. I have never made any such statement.

An hon. Member: Withdraw.