

Family Allowances Act

Mr. Johnston: I am coming to that. Don't worry. It seemed rather peculiar that there should be people getting up and asking for another loaf of bread and yet the Liberal government and those who support it say that we cannot give another loaf of bread when we have millions and millions of bushels of wheat in this country that we do not know what to do with. Last year we had the largest crop in the history of Canada by over 100 million bushels. We had no place to put it and yet we cannot give the old age pensioners another loaf of bread. Why? Because, as my hon. friend interjected, we have not got any Social Credit money. Just because we cannot find that little piece of paper to distribute purchasing power to our people we have to deprive them of a loaf of bread when we have millions of bushels of wheat that we do not know what to do with. What kind of thinking is that? Of course, I suppose that is what you would expect from people who have never stopped to discuss or think about the matter.

My hon. friends take some pride in saying that family allowances were introduced by a Liberal government. One of them went on to point out how the family allowance increased the purchasing power of the people receiving it and thereby helped all the people of Canada. Yes, that is true. I remember when the then prime minister introduced the bill years ago. When speaking on this very subject he pointed out that by giving people the family allowance, money, mind you, that was never worked for, it would increase their purchasing power. He said it would not only raise their standard of living but would raise the standard of living of everybody in the country because it would provide a greater market. Those words are the very words that have been used by Social Crediters ever since we have been coming to the House of Commons, and even before that out on the hustings.

In 1935 when we were advocating the issuance of a national dividend, not the printing of money wholesale but based on our production alone, every one of the members on the other side criticized us. They said, "How are you going to give money to people unless they go out and earn it?" They said it could not be done, that it was silly. My hon. friend wanted to know something about Social Credit money. The people are now getting this national dividend, and they do not have to go out and work at a job to receive it. It has added to the purchasing power and is raising the standard of living. It is increasing the prosperity of everybody in Canada. I should like to have a Liberal member get up now to deny that point. The

Liberals did lots of denying before the Prime Minister of that day brought in the legislation. Now they sit silent. They do not speak about a national dividend because, to a degree, that is exactly what it is.

One of the last speakers indicated that there were other ways of giving this assistance to these people. One means was through an income tax deduction to married people with families. Family allowances were not given to assist those in the higher brackets who can pay income taxes; they were given for the primary purpose of assisting those who had not sufficient earning power to pay income taxes. How does he arrive at the idea that an income tax deduction would assist these people when they have not sufficient income to pay income taxes? Surely we have not come to such a financially deprived condition, when we live in such a prosperous country as we say Canada is, that we cannot afford to give these people a little added purchasing power to afford them a better standard of living than they now have. You do not have to go to the province of Alberta to find that condition. Let me tell you that there are such conditions in both Quebec and Ontario, as well as the city of Ottawa.

Then another hon. member spoke about how inflation had assisted the people who are receiving family allowances; how it had increased the number of dollars in their pocket. It has, to a degree; but it has not greatly increased the number of dollars in the pockets of those people who really need family allowances or old age pensions. They are on a fixed income, and it is very low indeed. They can hardly eke out an existence, let alone live in any semblance of prosperity. It must not be forgotten either, Mr. Speaker, that it was under this administration that our dollar has been depreciated to the point where it is now worth only about 50 cents. Inflation has been a help to those people who have increased the number of dollars in their pockets, but it has hit at the very root of this problem of family allowances. It has hit those people the hardest who need the assistance, and has not increased the number of dollars in their pockets. Their lot has been made much worse.

How is the hon. member for Edmonton East (Mr. Macdonald) going to assist the people who really need this help? Surely he would be the last person to say that there are not a great many families in Canada who need it. The question we should ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, is not whether or not we have sufficient money to increase these family allowances. We should ask ourselves, can Canada afford it? I believe that is a different problem. If this country could produce the