

Family Allowances Act

legislation and that the provision that is being proposed in this legislation relating to the presumption of death is already included in the Old Age Security Act. I wonder as well if the Hon. Member realizes that under the current family allowances provision, as soon as a child disappears, the family allowance cheques are to be cut off and that in fact this provision allows the compassion to which the Hon. Member refers by allowing the Minister to have the payments continue rather than be cut off immediately as the current provisions provide.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the Hon. Member's first two questions is yes and the answer to the last question is no. With regard to the first two questions, one of my experiences both as a Member of Parliament now and as a provincial Member—in fact, it was 10 years ago today when I was first elected—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Angus: I just thought I'd add that in.

Mr. Benjamin: Ontario's loss, Canada's gain.

Mr. Angus: I have experienced having to convince the powers that be that some senior citizens were really alive. Can you imagine the feelings of a lady receiving a notice from the Government of Canada, through a bureaucratic mix-up, saying that her husband who is sitting right beside her is dead? I think we do have to be careful.

In terms of the latter question, I suggest that providing that flexibility is a positive step but I think having it as a declaration of death as opposed to a procedure for suspension other than at the moment the child runs away would be a better way to approach the issue. I would ask the Hon. Member if he could communicate that to the Minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Are there further questions or comments? If not, I will recognize the next speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak on behalf of thousands of Canadians who will be deprived of a sum of money that is essential to their well-being, if this majority Government manages to adopt Bill C-70.

In the riding of Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic, almost 10,000 families out of 20,000 are living on incomes of \$19,000 or less, which means that half of the people in my riding have to live on a salary of less than \$19,000. These families will be heavily penalized by the new measures provided in this Bill.

The more I listen to the debate, the more I think the issue is being confused, Mr. Speaker. In my comments I intend to make a sincere effort to explain to Canadians the injustice that will result if Bill C-70 is passed.

Women are penalized by this Bill, more so than any other group in our society. My colleague from Vancouver East (Ms.

Mitchell) described yesterday the harsh reality of single mothers living on a minimal income, who are forced to count every penny to feed their families, and sometimes end up soliciting on the street. I think it is appalling for a Government that is able to find thousands and even billions of dollars to bail out the Canadian Commercial Bank. And in the same breath, that same Government is talking about reducing the deficit. Where is the consistency in all that? What criteria are being used to support a large financial institution like the Canadian Commercial Bank instead of promoting the well-being of Canadians? Why is this Government penalizing our families and our children? And why should the needy once again have to pay?

In *Hansard* of November 15 of last year, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) said in the debate on the Throne Speech, and I quote: "It is my role as Minister of National Health and Welfare to put forward signals and initiatives that will strengthen the role of the family and give it more prominence in society than I feel it has been given before."

What made the Minister of National Health and Welfare change his position between November 15, 1984 and September 15, 1985? Does he think Bill C-70 is going to strengthen the role of the family? Our analysis will prove the contrary. The argument being used in this debate on the other side of the House is as follows: There will be an increase in the child tax credit. True \$450 for each child in 1986, \$489 for each child in 1987 and \$524 in 1988. However, they failed to mention that starting in 1989, the child tax credit will be only partially indexed.

As far as family allowances are concerned, in 1986, a family will receive \$22 less in family allowances. From 1987 to 1990, as the increases in the child tax credit are added, a family will be getting higher benefits for their children under the Budget. As I just said, it is true benefits will be higher, but they will start losing ground in 1991, and these losses will increase from year to year, because the two child benefits, namely family allowance and the child tax credit, will be increased only by that percentage of inflation that is in excess of 3 per cent.

● (1730)

Without the Budget changes, these benefits would have been fully indexed to the cost of living. That is something we must not forget.

The neediest families will get increased child benefits from 1987 to 1990. Subsequently, they will lose money because of other changes in the Budget. However, the vast majority of Canadian families, including many families living below the poverty line and on low incomes, will be receiving reduced child benefits as of 1986. To understand why this is happening, we have to consider the Budget's further repercussions on child benefits and on our income tax system.