

Family Allowances Act, 1973

The impact of inflation is hardly equal across the board. It is inevitable that people at the bottom end of the scale need increased benefits. As a Liberal, I would say that as soon as the country can afford to increase old age pensions and the basic Family Allowance and return full indexation, it probably will do so.

It is amazing to see how many people fail to appreciate what might have happened to those programs if the six and five program had not been successful and inflation had risen from 12 per cent to 25 per cent. Where would the money come from? Would we here in the House allow indexation at 25 per cent or increase the base of pensions and Family Allowances and, in doing so, drive the deficit of the country up by \$10 billion or \$15 billion? Would the business community stand idly by or ask us where we expect to get the money from?

I fail to understand why people do not realize that inflation must be curtailed before we can generate the kind of money that is needed for distribution to the less fortunate.

Mr. Crosby: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the stirring defence of the six and five program given by the Hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey), particularly in the presence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), who also gave a stirring defence of the same restraint program in Government spending that affects the young people, children and senior citizens in this country.

In addition, there are other Liberal Members who gave the same stirring defence. They were the Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans), the Hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. Breaux), the Hon. Member for Lotbinière (Mr. Dubois), the Hon. Member for Montreal-Mercier (Mrs. Hervieux-Payette) and the Hon. Member for Manicouagan (Mr. Maltais). All of them gave stirring defences of the six and five program.

However, the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops criticized that program by saying that it was repressive, unfair and leading to massive unemployment—1.6 million unemployed—and created an immoral situation in Canada. That is what the Roman Catholic Bishops said. The Member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey) apparently went public and condemned his colleagues—

Miss Bégin: That is a lie.

Mr. Crosby: —from Ottawa Centre, Gloucester, Lotbinière, Montreal-Mercier and Manicouagan. He said that they were being unfair and would not stand for that attack on the Bishops.

Where does the Hon. Member stand? Does he stand with his five colleagues in defence of six and five or against the Roman Catholic Bishops in their opposition to the six and five?

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman, for whom I have great respect, ends up with a rather false argument by comparing apples and oranges. I think the Hon. Member is more intelligent than to think that being for six and five means

that one is against the Catholic Bishops, but I am not sure anymore.

• (1620)

Mr. Crosby: You explain.

Mr. Mackasey: I do not think he has read the statement of the Bishops, because if he had read it, he would find that it did not tackle the six and five program. I happen to share their views, and happened to be on record last night on the radio program "As It Happens" concerning the number one issue in the country.

The Hon. Member asks the question in good faith, and I am answering it. If I believed everything I read, or everything that happened in Winnipeg last week according to the newspapers, I would say, "God help the Tories", but I do not. I have more respect for Joe Clark.

Mr. Crosby: Find out about economic affairs, Bishops.

Mr. Mackasey: The Hon. Member asked the question, and I am entitled to answer. If the Hon. Member reads beyond the headlines, that is, if he is capable, he will find that in the body of that article it was made very clear that I was not fighting with my five colleagues. But let him read it.

Mr. Crosby: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mackasey: Maybe the Hon. Member cannot. I will not go into that. I want to say what I indicated, that I too have an opinion on what the Bishops said. As I understood their remarks, they said that the level of unemployment in this country was deplorable. I share their view, and said so publicly. I relate to that statement, entirely. What I also said was that I may have a different view from other people who have been publicly commenting on what are moral issues and what are temporal issues.

If the gentleman so desires, I will provide him with a transcript of what I said publicly last night and what I will repeat over and over. I simply said that what is spiritual today is not what would have been considered spiritual 25 years ago. Young priests and ministers, some of whom are in this House—and I am looking at one—see their vocation in life as going beyond a little square box which limits them to very narrow spiritual concepts. Young Catholic priests think it quite in order, spiritually, to worry about unemployment and about the things that lead to the breakup of marriages, to worry about the wasted years of the unemployed, and to speak out on Government matters and to say, "Do something about it". I applaud the Bishops for exactly that.

Mr. Crosby: Denouncing the six and five.

Mr. Mackasey: Where I differ with them is concerning their views on economic policy, which I do not think would resolve the issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please.