

Family Allowances Act

forward with improved social security measures, it has allowed our social security program, so far as family allowances are concerned, to go backward rather than forward.

As I have already said, the Minister of Fisheries put the payment of family allowances in proper perspective when he said it was not taxation on materials and labour for use by the government but was a transfer payment. It was taking certain moneys from well-to-do Canadians and helping to redistribute and reallocate our purchasing power so that mothers, especially those in the lower income groups, might be better able to provide for their families. Such a redistribution in purchasing power might mean for a few people a reduced number of trips to Bermuda, Florida and California. Perhaps they could make one trip fewer in a lifetime without any serious result. A redistribution in purchasing power might mean fewer mink coats but it would mean more children's snowsuits. It might mean fewer Cadillacs driven in Canada but it would mean that mothers would be better able to afford baby carriages and children's go-carts. A redistribution of purchasing power so as to bring about an increase in family allowances might result in the use of less champagne but more milk.

In my opinion such a redistribution in purchasing power for the benefit of Canadian children is long overdue. I recommend this resolution to the house for serious consideration. I believe that in our democracy we dare not allow our social security measures to stand still. Democracy is on trial throughout the world, and if we are to prove to our Canadian citizens and to the world at large that democracy is the best type of political system anywhere in the world, as we all believe it to be, then it is essential that year after year we add to and improve our social security measures.

I do not expect that I shall live to see the day when, in my opinion, social security measures are adequate. It is something you must work at year in and year out. I believe the year 1953 is the time when this government should bring before parliament legislation which would provide an increase, as I have said, of at least 60 per cent in family allowances. It would not increase the real purchasing power above that prevailing in 1944, but would merely restore to the family allowances cheque the purchasing power that was represented by such an amount when the act was first enacted in 1944. If we do that, as I hope we shall, then the time may not be too far distant when there should be an increase in the

real purchasing power of the family allowances cheque. I feel this legislation has proven to be of value, and that an improvement in the legislation by way of increasing the purchasing power of the family allowances cheque will result in our Canadian children being better fed, better clothed, better educated, and will give them an opportunity of more adequate medical services.

I believe that such a program is an investment in Canada's future. It will not cost anything in the way of reduced production of the nation but is, in fact, merely a transfer of purchasing power from the well-to-do to those who need it most, namely, the mothers of families in the low wage group, particularly the group to which I have referred, the 37 per cent of all wage earners in Canada who in 1951 earned less than \$1,500.

Mr. F. H. Larson (Kindersley): I could not take very serious issue with the hon. member when he feels that family allowances should be continued and increased as we can pay for them. He has made an impassioned appeal to many classes in this country, including labour, the textile industry and the dairy industry. There is only one particular class to whom he did not make a very serious appeal, and that is the taxpayer. It is not the man who drives the Cadillac or the lady who wears the mink coat who pays the largest amount of taxes in this country, but the ordinary person like the hon. member and myself. We pay indirect taxes on practically everything we use. Most of the revenue of this country comes from that source.

Another matter I should like to discuss is the fact that the family allowances were never expected to cure all the economic ills of this country. In other words, people were raising families in this country long before family allowances were conceived, and the head of the family was expected to provide what the family needed. Children were born, grew up and were educated, and the head of the family provided for their education and their maintenance.

Several years ago the former leader of the Liberal party in Canada, who was prime minister at the time, felt that our greatest investment should be in the future, in the children of the country who would grow up to be the men and women who would govern the nation and produce what the country required. I understand that when he mentioned family allowances to his cabinet they were an unheard-of thing. The cabinet did not know what he was talking about, and did not believe that that was