

Family Allowances

Instead of collecting extra tax dollars necessary to finance so many social welfare plans, the government could reduce taxes so as to offset increased costs due to higher minimum wages. An increase in minimum wages actually costs the country less because it cuts down on social security costs. We would then be paying people, not governments. Through steps such as this government is taking, it is lurching toward a guaranteed annual income for all Canadians. The handwriting is on the wall. All you have to do is put together the speeches, actions and policy papers of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde).

The government thinks it is doing a good thing in moving Canadians along the road to more social security. But it is leading us deeper into the bottomless pit of the welfare state. And what is unconscionable is that it is using the national emergency of runaway inflation to make Canadian families even more dependent on the largesse of the government in order to buy food, clothes and shelter.

I want social security, too, as a protection for those who truly need help, the handicapped, the poor, the aged. But I am not going to sit idly by and watch this government play politics with the continued development of the Canadian people into a great international nation. I will fight this government in this chamber and on the hustings, because the Liberal Party believes in making people more dependent on the state and my party believes in the uplifting spirit of human independence.

● (2030)

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear the previous speaker say that this government or a subsequent government will have to resort to the guaranteed annual income to establish security while respecting individual freedom in Canada. The hon. member mentioned the increasing cost of living, minimum wages and price and wage freeze but the bill now before us relates to the family allowances increase to \$12 from October 1.

At this stage, I would say that for years now we have been requesting family allowances—not only \$12 a month but \$20—and I would call the minister's attention on the fact that in 1956 when I was the Liberal candidate in the riding of Abitibi East, and my leader was Mr. Georges-Emile Lapalme, both wearing a white beret at Val-d'Or, we urged the government to grant monthly universal family allowances of \$20.

Now the minister is a bit late with his intention of increasing family allowances since it has been a necessity for a long time.

Mr. Roy (Laval): He was not born yet!

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Perhaps he was not born yet. Anyway, he was not very old in 1956 as this happened 17 years ago.

An hon. Member: He is a young minister!

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Surely he was already born even though he is a young minister. Perhaps he was

too young to understand. But even today even though he is older, his understanding has not improved.

In 1956, we requested a monthly \$20 and my colleagues and I have been here since 1962 and urging for monthly and universal family allowances of \$20 and I regret that bill C-223 is not providing for the payment of benefits amounting to \$20 a month retroactive to January 1, 1973.

Some ministers said that wage increases have just been granted to railway employees retroactive to January 1, 1973. We are in favour of that. But as far as making the new family allowances retroactive, the government does not understand that.

Mr. Speaker, we have asked that a \$20 monthly allowance be paid directly by Ottawa to all Canadian children. Yet, this bill provides for a \$12 increase and a further \$8 increase effective January 1, 1974. But the plan will be provincially administered, and this is where I make reservations. The \$12 allowance will be guaranteed to all, but the provinces will be free to play with the remaining \$8. In fact, they will be in a position to grant \$25 to a group of children and \$15 to another. And I am under the impression that in the province of Quebec for instance, \$2 or \$3 more will be paid each month directly to all and then the remaining \$5 will be used indiscriminately. It will not be the first time that this has happened.

It came to my knowledge, with respect to winter works about 2 or 3 years ago, that Ottawa was paying the provinces—I am speaking specifically of the province of Quebec—for the work done, and whenever municipalities or organized groups asked for payment, Quebec answered: It is Ottawa that did not pay. Therefore, they kept those people waiting and forced them to borrow from credit unions or banks, in order to pay their winter works before the grants were paid by Ottawa. I once asked specific questions and learned that the grants had actually been paid to the province of Quebec but that Quebec had tampered with the federal money to pay something else.

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that exactly the same thing will happen with family allowances as with winter works. How nice! Those people in Quebec criticize Ottawa all the time, the federal government, the central government, they protest against the encroachments upon provincial autonomy; but when the time comes to ensure provincial autonomy they misappropriate funds under the pretext that they are poor, that Ottawa will not spend a penny and that they are ill treated.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am fed up with those crybabies who are far too many in the province of Quebec. One of them spends his time railing against Ottawa, namely René Lévesque, leader of the separatist party, who believes and would have the people in Quebec believe that with the advent of a separatist government, Quebec would become civilized. We had an example of such dealings this afternoon. During the news broadcast a while ago, I heard that the New Democratic Party regime in Chile had been overthrown.

An hon. Member: It is Mr. Allende.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Allende, yes. The president even committed suicide, according to the latest news.