

Family Allowances Act, 1973

for the time being I want to confirm to all mothers that the Child Tax Credit will remain an annual payment and not be distributed monthly or every three months.

I say that, and I have to link the Child Tax Credit to the Family Allowance because it is linked in fact although not legislatively speaking, because many Members opposite—I must say this to my great disappointment because I do not accept that type of politics; I think it is really dishonest—have used unbelievable expressions in English—the speeches were all in English—saying that we were taking away food from the mouths of children, taking away the bottle of milk from children, and so on and so forth.

I will not waste my time or the time of anyone around me by listing all the stupidities and literary abuses I have heard in this House on capping the Family Allowances, but I would like to say that no one is a fool and we do see the game being played. I hope the public also sees it. We are not doing any of that.

For the first month of the year mothers received more money but a little less than anticipated. They had a loss of about \$1.40 a month on the Family Allowance cheque, my Parliamentary Secretary confirms to me, and that is true. They had an increase but a relative loss for the first month of the year. But then the special increase in the Child Tax Credit will offset all of that; they will have it in their hands before the other months of the six and five program. We are therefore not taking away a penny from two-thirds of all Canadian families with children. That means all people with the lowest income and many, many people with middle-class incomes as well. All young couples who have not yet reached a higher socio-economic group will receive that benefit.

• (1115)

I have met Members of Parliament whose wives are receiving these Child Tax Credits because they have many children. I have met journalists in the same category. There are many people in this environment which I would not qualify as being in poverty. These people do receive at least a partial payment of the Child Tax Credit, because two-thirds of Canadian mothers do. If anyone should try to make the public believe, like the Conservatives in particular do, that food is taken away from the table, that is such an abuse and exaggeration that I suppose it speaks for itself. I could go on, but I do not believe it is necessary.

I want to explain, in this final stage of debate on Bill C-132, what we are attempting to do, which is to reduce inflation, not savings, as many Members have tried to say. It is easy to prove, and I have proved it in committee, because the sums saved are not that extraordinary. That was not the intention. The intention was to have a package of measures involving as many Canadians as possible to mobilize ourselves to fight inflation. It is succeeding. There is no reason not to keep our word and enforce the various pieces of legislation needed. No one can prove one way or another, as I said at the Senate committee, that this particular measure, even the complete set of Government measures regarding the six and five program,

have been the cause of bringing down inflation. Nobody can prove that because economic signs are so controversial and made up of so many schools of thought. But nobody can disprove it either.

One thing is sure. We did take action. It has mobilized Canadians, there is no doubt about that, as statistics on credit cards have proven. People have started changing their consumer patterns and paying back their debts instead of living above their means. We have all done that, but now something has changed. Where this Bill fits exactly is impossible to demonstrate but it is part of a package that seems to have worked.

One thing is important, and that is the only one that counts with many mothers. A basket of food now costs less than it did last year, because inflation is being brought down. That means that mothers, despite not receiving the full indexation, will be compensated because of the increase in the value of their dollars.

That is the objective that I pursued for the common good through the programs for which I am directly responsible. There was surely a full and frank discussion of these objectives. People have been aware of the exact figures involved for months.

I will finish by saying that the success of the six and five program is crucial to the well-being of Canadians, in this particular case mothers of families, and I think that is why that objective is so easy for me to defend, despite the appearance of being unpleasant.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I have several questions, which I will put one at a time. The first question to the Minister is that with this change in the law I believe revenue is being cut out for those children who are in institutional or public care. Does the Minister have any compensation plan to provide more money to those kinds of institutions?

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, no. I said earlier, and that is why I did not repeat it this morning, that this Bill does not affect children receiving what is called a Special Allowance, which means children below the age of 18 who are maintained by Government institutions. None of them will be affected. They will receive the full increase in the cost of living.

• (1120)

Mrs. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, why did the Minister allow Family Allowance cheques to go out with the indexing already reduced to 6 per cent when the Bill had not been passed and there was no parliamentary sanction for the action? Does she not agree that this was unethical and insulting to mothers and children as well as being illegal? Also I would like to know why this was done just for this Bill and not for the other six and five Bills as well.

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, it was surely not unethical, nor was it illegal. I explained that as well, and I am sorry if I did not repeat it today. In cases like this—and this happens all the time for programs which are translated into direct cheques for people—we take the legal advice of the Department of Justice.