

the farmers. Provincial departments send out Ag. Reps. I know because I used to train Ag. Reps. They try to help the farmers grow better crops and find better markets. Couldn't we have a Department of Labour that actually goes out to try to help working people, that tells them what their rights are under Canadian law, that tells them what unions are available for them, and yes, even helps in the process of organizing? I am not suggesting that it help in bargaining. We can leave that up to the unions for they are capable there. This proposal could bring about a very significant shift in the distribution of income in this country. That would be something real.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, because the minister has given us an indication that he is moving, that he is willing to take this one small step, I will go along with him. Members of my party will go along with him. We will help him not to falter as he takes this step, but we will expect him to keep in stride.

● (1610)

[Translation]

**Mr. Roméo LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent):** Mr. Speaker, there might be a good number of reasons to support Bill C-211. It could be of course to gain a political advantage but I think we should support it mainly because we established its beneficial effects for lower income families, that is to say the majority of my constituents and a good number of citizens in my province of New Brunswick.

You only have to visit the small fishing plants along the Northumberland Strait to understand why the housewives who work there are waiting for the increase proposed by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde). They often get only the provincial minimum wages, or \$1.50 an hour and often their husband does not do any better. However, the real needs are not lower in these regions. Those housewives describe what it costs to dress the teenagers who are going to school, particularly to regional schools. To those of us who lived through days when clothes had to be mended and when patches stood in testimony of mothers' skill and family poverty, no need to recall that things like television have on the youth a levelling effect and that there are no more really remote or isolated regions. Country and small town teenagers want to live like the people they see on television and want to follow the fashion and for that, they make a strong pressure on their family.

But if they wish to be like others, country and small town teenagers have few opportunities to get casual income. There are not many opportunities for newspaper boys, work in the corners store or babysitting. In other words, all the burden is on parents who desperately want to give their children the education they did not get themselves.

If I insist on the needs of teenagers it is because this group is often tempted to quit school prematurely to make a few dollars and it is at that age that one is most affected by the feeling of not keeping up with the rest. Instead of the standard \$20 a month per child formula chosen by the province of New Brunswick, I would have preferred a formula that would put greater emphasis on teenagers and their parents.

### Family Allowances

Mr. Speaker, the increase in family allowances contained in this bill was quite rightly biased in favor of low income families. They will thus receive substantial increases, roughly \$114 net after taxes annually for every child in the province of New Brunswick, over \$27 million a year for that province alone. Even if it is taxable, the greater majority of citizens in that province will keep nearly all the increase contained in this bill. I for one fully endorse the principle of giving more to those who need it most and I am glad to see that principle set out under the Income Tax Act. The Minister of National Health and Welfare stated in his speech yesterday that such a way of distributing family allowances represents a step in the direction of more equitable regional distribution of income. It seems to me that within an area that distribution will benefit those who live away from large centers, who do not want to move in those centers and who are prepared to make certain sacrifices to continue and live in their towns. If it is true that large amounts were spent on regional development it is also true that those monies were spent mainly in growth centers better equipped to draw the maximum out of them.

Some people see family allowances as a sort of supplement to a minimum vital income. Mr. Speaker, it must be hoped that in a great number of cases families will use those monies as a supplement that will also allow to improve the quality of life whether it is by improving the quality of food by going to the dentist, by paying for musical lessons and even by allowing the boys to attend hockey schools. All these things are considered as normal in more wealthy regions but they are often a luxury in disadvantaged areas.

[English]

One can hope, Mr. Speaker, that provincial authorities which provide only a strict minimum of services in schools and community life will not use this increase in family allowances to reduce or to slow down the progress in the improvement of services. The fall-out in taxation terms from this increase which, for example, in New Brunswick should result in an increase of 4.4 million dollars, would be well invested if it were reserved for improvement in dental care for children, in education for better nutrition, in kindergartens and in greater allowances for teenagers. Some provinces, including, I believe, Alberta, Quebec and Prince Edward Island, have already indicated clearly that they would favour increasing allowances for teenagers to beyond \$20.

I also wish to say that I support the minister's statement that family allowances will continue to be sent by the federal government directly to families. If we are to have unity in this country it is important that citizens understand where their tax dollar is spent, and by whom. In fact, when I was in my riding last Friday I read with interest in the New Brunswick newspapers that "the provincial government has decided to distribute \$20 a month—a child—under the federally financed family allowances program." The Saint John *Telegraph Journal* carried the headline, "New Brunswick plans to pay \$20 a child allowance". One might say that the author of the headline had not read the story, or had not realized that three paragraphs below, the newspaper honestly reports that the federal government pays the whole amount of the