

wondering how much pleasure my friend the Minister of National Health and Welfare would have had if the election of last October 30 had produced a majority Liberal government in Canada. Does he suppose for one minute that in less than one year he would have brought in a couple of increases in respect of old age security, a couple of increases in respect of family allowances, and proposed increases to the Canada Pension Plan, as well as even a proposed change in the Canada Assistance Plan? Not on your life! We would have been lucky to get, in four years out of the minister or ten years out of the Tories, what this minister has been able to bring before the House of Commons in a period of less than 12 months. As I said on April 18 when the minister tabled his orange paper, what a difference October 30, 1972, made in the history of this country, particularly in the history of social legislation.

● (2030)

If some of my friends in various parts of the House think that I am being too generous in welcoming this legislation, it must be obvious that the reason we welcome it is that we know we are responsible for it.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** Come on, Stanley.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I hear interesting phrases such as, "Oh, come on Stanley" and, "Oh, that isn't nice." Well, Mr. Speaker, it is the truth. My friend, the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald), is agreeing. He knows, also, that the reason he has been able to bring in some measures respecting veterans is also due to the fact that on October 30, 1972, the people of this country did not elect a majority government that would have done nothing, but elected a parliament of minorities and gave us sufficient strength to demand the measures for which we stand.

So I say that we welcome very warmly, this piece of legislation. Until last month, September, family allowances had not changed at all except for the fact that the original schedule of \$5, \$6, \$7 and \$8 a month was reduced to a schedule of just two amounts, \$6 or \$8 a month. But until last month \$8 was the top figure paid by way of family allowances—and it is the amount for which some of us voted in the House of Commons in 1944, nearly 30 years ago.

**An hon. Member:** Holy smoke!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** So we are proud of the fact that by virtue of a bill which we passed in September of this year, the average family with children in this country is getting an increase in its income, in this month of October, of about \$10 a month. Now, by virtue of Bill C-211, in January, 1974, the average Canadian family with children will have a further increase of from \$12 to \$16 a month. In a sense I pull these figures out of a hat, but they are based on an average family having two children and on the fact that some of them will have to pay income tax and some will not. Those who have two children and who do not pay income tax will have an increase of \$16 a month in January over what they are receiving this October, November and December. So

### *Family Allowances*

because this is, be it ever so small, nevertheless a contribution to the families of this country in their effort to cope with the rising cost of living, I say that we welcome this piece of legislation.

We welcome it, also, because of its simplicity. In a moment I may complain that it is not as simple as I should like it to be. Certainly it is not as simple as the bill that we passed in 1944, which consisted of only five pages. This one consists of 20 pages. But compared with the bill known as FISP, Bill C-211 is the ultimate in simplicity. I heard my friend, the hon. member for Hillsborough, a few moments ago refer to FISP as a bill of ignominious memory. I forget what his precise adjective was, but it was not far off that one. Under my breath I was saying to my colleagues that even so the Tories had voted for it. I remind the minister that the government which he joined after the election, and the department over which he now presides, presented us last year with that complete and utter monstrosity which was aimed at achieving selectivity on the basis of a means or a needs test which was completely and utterly unworkable.

**Mr. Alexander:** And discriminatory.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Again I say that but for the results of the election on October 30 we might have had that bill brought back to us again. This bill is simple but for one main feature, and is much more like the bill of 1944 in that it has no means test, no needs test and no complications of the kind that would have made FISP completely unworkable. The main reason, as I see it, that this bill consists of 20 pages rather than five is the flexibility that has been written into it under which the provinces, if they wish, may vary the amount of the allowance from the \$20 norm that is laid down in the bill.

I listened with interest to the minister this afternoon when he indicated that it looked as though only two provinces will take advantage of that flexibility, one being Quebec and the other Alberta. I want to say quite frankly that I wish this flexibility were not necessary; I wish the payment of family allowances could be the same with respect to all the children of Canada, the same \$20 a month. But I have no hesitation in saying that this is not a very high price to pay for a feeling of co-operation among the provincial governments and the federal government; and if this provision produces harmony and co-operation in this field, if this makes provinces such as Quebec and Alberta feel that they can go along, I suggest that that is not a very high price to pay.

We shall watch with interest what variations those provinces make in the basic \$20 and, like the hon. member for Hillsborough, I should like to be told when we get into committee how the government proposes to deal with the situation if the figures that are set by those two provinces result in more than \$20 a month on the average being paid into each of them. However, that is a detail which we can work out.

I trust, in so far as I can tell from reading the bill, that any overpayment that results because those two provinces set up schedules that are too high will not be collected from the individual. I gather that if any overpayment has to be collected or if any adjustment has to be made, it will be the province that will have to take care of it and not the