

Family Allowances

have some measure of security in the years when they are not able to fend for themselves. That is why we are pleased to be able to support this measure at the present time.

As I understand the principle of the measure, it is to be a children's allowance. The moneys appropriated and expended by parliament in connection with this particular measure are to go specifically and exclusively to the children of this country. I have heard many opinions expressed across the floor of the house with respect to the limitations and changes that should be made. I heard references to New Zealand and Australia and the systems that they follow. The hon. member for Edmonton-East (Mrs. Casselman) made an excellent speech. The hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) made, I think, one of the best contributions to the debate from that side of the house. That hon. member, occupying an official position in the Department of Labour, viewed this measure in a realistic way, I was pleased to hear him express the sentiments he did. I want to take this opportunity to say that, if the necessary action to support the sentiments expressed is taken, then I do not think anyone need have any fear with respect to the working of this measure if and when it is put into effect. The hon. member for Essex East and the hon. member for Edmonton East referred to the fact that there was a means test in New Zealand. I do not think that is correct.

Mr. MARTIN: I do not think I said that.

Mr. GILLIS: I thought you did. If you did not, I am prepared to withdraw the statement. But the hon. member for Edmonton East definitely did refer to a means test. That suggests to the average person a social service worker invading his home, examining his cupboards and deciding whether he is sufficiently undernourished to receive a grant of this kind. That is not the situation in New Zealand at all. The situation is that minimum rates of five pounds five shillings are established. There is a ceiling on the total income of those who receive the allowance, but there is definitely a substantial minimum income provided first of all. Anyone not earning in excess of the ceiling, which applies to both urban and rural workers, receives an allowance. On the other hand, a rural or urban worker who may not be earning the minimum set will receive a sufficient allowance to bring him up to that minimum. That is how the thing is worked in New Zealand. It is not a means test, but there definitely is a ceiling and a minimum standard set for the whole country. I merely wanted to make that

[Mr. Gillis.]

correction because I think it is unfair to the country which has pioneered so much in social service measures.

As I said a moment ago, I think the measure now before the house was designed definitely to care for the children of Canada. There should not be any quibbling; there should not be any limitations; it should not be assumed that it will not work properly. I think every child within the age limits set out in the bill should receive this grant. It is immaterial to me whether you get some of it back by taxing the higher income groups. I may be earning \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year and my family is well provided for. If you put a ceiling on this it may happen that within six months I have no income because of sickness or from other causes. The result would be that my family would have no income. As the matter stands now, I think the allowance should be paid to every child in Canada. I think also it would be proper to tax it back from the higher bracket incomes. There should be no discrimination. If this is to be given to the children of Canada in recognition of our responsibility to them, then it should be given without any reservation or restriction. That is what should be done in order to keep within the principles underlying children's allowances.

I have in mind the different mothers' allowance acts of the provinces. There is no such thing as a mother's allowance. The qualifying section in those acts requires that the mother shall have two children under a certain age, or one child in extenuating circumstances. It is a children's allowance rather than a mother's allowance. There are many limiting factors which should not get tangled up in this legislation.

I have heard the opinion expressed that there is no need for these allowances. I have heard it said, particularly this evening by the hon. member for Cartier (Mr. Rose), that in some respects organized labour are opposing the measure. The hon. member went on to name certain people. I would point out to the house that the Canadian Congress of Labour made a presentation to the government in February of this year. There was no direct opposition on behalf of the Canadian Congress of Labour in that presentation. I do not want to read this into the record because the government has it. They accepted family allowances with certain reservations.

Mr. HOMUTH: But they have some fear.

Mr. GILLIS: Certainly, and rightly so. I am going to express that opinion as I go along.

Mr. MARTIN: Did not Mr. Forsey approve it in the reconstruction committee?