

Family Income Security Plan

Mr. Munro: The Senate Committee on Poverty had a chance—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Don't throw the Senate committee at me.

Mr. Munro: You expressed your views on that, or at least your party did.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I shall get around to the Senate Committee on Poverty in a moment. Because of what I am going to say to the minister, I remind him that he is my friend. My point is that we are still being handed the same process we have had down through the years with Liberal governments. They decide what is to be put before us; they put it before us and we have to take it or leave it. As I say, under the responsible government set-up that we have, that is their right. But it is the Prime Minister and the cabinet colleagues around him who have said they want to do it differently. They want parliament to be involved. We have had no chance at all to be involved in this.

We now have a bill before us in complete form. The minister found it necessary to ask the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard), are you for or against it? The minister thinks he put the hon. member on the spot. If he puts that question to me I shall tell him where we stand, if he has any doubt.

Mr. Munro: I am not going to ask you.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My point is, no wonder the attendance is low in this House. No wonder there is lack of interest. We have been fed the notion that we would participate in the process, but we are not getting the chance to do so.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We can have this debate on second reading and express our views. Then the bill will be shipped off to committee where we will be permitted to go through it clause by clause. However, will we be able to get anywhere with basic changes in the concept of this bill? No. The only changes made in this bill will be those agreed upon by the Prime Minister of Canada and the Prime Minister of Quebec. The Prime Minister of Canada told Prime Minister Bourassa in a letter that if they reached agreement on provincial participation in this regard, the necessary amendments could be made to the legislation as it was going—

Mr. Bécharde: You sound like Drew in 1944.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member knows better than that. I think I have made my point. It is the same old "take it or leave it" technique—and it comes from a government that said it would use the white paper technique!

I am recasting the line of development of my argument because of the interjection of the minister about the Senate Committee on Poverty. I will give the minister the benefit of the doubt because maybe the speech writers did it for him, but I thought it was less than fair of him to read us quotations implying that certain well known organiza-

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

tions in the country support the principle of this bill which in the main includes cutting off some people and paying only certain individuals. He referred to the Canadian Council on Social Development—but did he quote what that council said with regard to the Family Income Security Plan? No. He paraphrased what that body said before the Senate Committee on Poverty when it was dealing with the question of poverty in general. Even in his paraphrase he was not able to say categorically that the Canadian Council on Social Development is in support of this bill.

Mr. Munro: Of course not.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The minister says, "Of course not". But he stood here and tried to give the impression that the Canadian Council on Social Development, the National Council on Welfare, the Canadian Labour Congress—

Mr. Munro: I said they thought we were doing something meaningful in respect of family allowances.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am not going to paraphrase; I am going to put a quotation on the record. This is from the comments and recommendations by the Canadian Council on Social Development on the Family Income Security Plan proposed in the federal government white paper "Income security for Canadians", 1970. This is a policy statement issued in 1971. I quote from page (iii):

The council believes that:

Family allowances should be universal, paid to all families with dependent children as a social right thus avoiding divisiveness among families and any element of stigma. The present program—

That is the family allowances program.

—has this feature but FISP would eliminate it.

That is an open condemnation of this bill in changing from the principle of universality to selectivity.

Mr. Munro: No, it is not.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I suggest that the minister read these documents before making interjections.

Mr. Munro: Do they say how we are going to recover the money?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On page (iv) they deal with the question of universality and selectivity. They say they believe in selectivity within universality. In other words, they are prepared to have arrangements made for the tax of those in the higher income brackets to be adjusted so that most, or 100 per cent, of it is recovered.

Mr. Munro: Now we are getting at it.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Now, now! They come down squarely for a plan that maintains universality and avoids the concept of putting some people into the position of being stigmatized because they are getting something that others do not get. I ask the minister to read page 10, and I quote:

Family allowances should be universal: i.e. paid to all families with dependent children. As such, they would be accepted as a