

Family Allowances

Mr. GILLIS: The department will take the necessary steps to advertise and publicize this legislation?

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): I think the suggestion is a most excellent one. If this legislation is under my jurisdiction I shall see that it is carried out. If not, I shall see that it is recommended to the particular department.

Bill reported.

At one o'clock the house took recess.

The house resumed at three o'clock.

FAMILY ALLOWANCES

PROVISION FOR PAYMENTS IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN UNDER SIXTEEN

The house resumed on Wednesday, July 26, consideration of the motion of Mr. Mackenzie King for the second reading of bill No. 161, to provide for family allowances.

Mr. J. G. DIEFENBAKER (Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is my purpose to deal, I hope in a dispassionate and non-partisan way, with certain phases of the subject of family allowances and the bill which has been introduced; for I believe that no more tremendous or important issue can come before this parliament for the post-war period than the one we are now discussing.

With the objective provided for in this bill there can be no disagreement; for if I understand it aright it means that through this measure an endeavour will be made to achieve equal opportunity, particularly for those in the lower income brackets, and to give many who to-day are denied freedom from fear and freedom from want the hope of something better in the future than this world and this country have seen before. I realize that to achieve these objectives planning must be done now, and with the objectives in mind I agree and in the aim and the purposes that it has, I concur. I realize that plans such as this require a great deal of organization now. If we are to have a dynamic and a workable plan the cooperation of hon. members of all sides is necessary. I repeat that I agree with the objectives of this bill, while criticizing it in some particulars—which I shall deal with in committee—and also raising a question as to the constitutional issue which was dealt with the other day by the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent).

The challenge of adventure into new fields of social welfare must not find us discouraged

[Mr. Ian Mackenzie.]

by the difficulties inherent in the British North America Act. We must go forth into new horizons of social justice. To-day the opportunity comes to us as it has come to few men in few generations to take part in the forward march of the common man. I believe that my views and those of most hon. members are to be found in the idealism reflected in a passage of the National Resources Development report for 1943 which was placed before the President of the United States in January of that year. In the words of that report; there must be—

—the fullest possible development of the human personality, in relation to the common good, in a framework of freedoms and rights, of justice, liberty, equality and the consent of the governed.

As a means of protecting justice, freedom and democracy:

The three factors—democracy, dynamic economy and peace—never in the history of mankind have been united in a political system.

Changes are taking place and tremendous changes are about to take place. We in the parliaments of the empire to-day must recognize that. The state must guarantee and underwrite equal access to security, to education, to nutrition and to health for all. That assurance is inexorable through the awakening of the spiritual being of man everywhere and the recognition of all men of their responsibilities for the welfare of all other men, not only within their own state but beyond its confines. Too often some of us are afraid to approach new horizons because there has been no experience to guide us. I think it is a significant fact that in 1944 there is not in the governments of Great Britain, of Australia and of Canada and in the cabinet of the United States any man who was born in the present century. In other words there are far too many men in positions of authority without having along with their experience the idealism, the drive, the forcefulness, the initiative and the appreciation of present day conditions which potentially men of the present generation should be able to give to government. My philosophy is that, though I ask no man to follow me in this view, I believe in welcoming change, provided it will be made effective. Too often in this country the dead hand of the past as it is written in the British North America Act has destroyed reforms which ought to have been brought into being for the benefit of the future. The party to which I belong has no reason not to have the reforming dynamic of that of any other party in this house. It was this party which brought in women's suffrage, which coordinated the various railroads under the Canadian National Railways, which brought in the Wheat Board Act of 1935 and the Bank of Canada Act in