

Family Allowances Act

It is fine to look at all the reports of the social agencies and people who examine the income of poor people. They say that the best way to give money to parents for children is through the child tax credit because it is based on a person's income. The less you make, the more you get back.

There is one flaw in making calculation totally on the basis of income at the end of a taxation year. The cheque we are talking about here today is a monthly cheque. Someone in my riding is making perhaps \$5,000 a year. He has seven or eight children at home. His total income is \$5,000 a year. Add up what this person gets in the monthly family allowance cheque, multiply it by 12 and it comes to half of \$5,000. Now his income is \$7,500. Then you add on what the family gets. The head of the family gets this money. Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? Because that money is used to pay the light and the heat bill as well as groceries. That is what that monthly pay cheque is used for. When you add the child tax credit, the income goes up to \$9,500 for the year. You can now see the importance of the family allowance cheque and the child tax credit cheque. The most important cheque is the monthly family allowance cheque.

What happens if that cheque is delayed? I was going to say, "The Government of Canada in its wisdom", but I do not know where the wisdom was when the Government cut back on the hours in which the rural post offices could be open in Newfoundland and in other parts of Canada this year from 40 hours to 30 hours. When that happened, a problem arose. UIC cheques come on a certain day, Canada pension cheques come on a certain day, old age pension cheques and family allowance cheques come on a certain day. Some of those post office closures meant that for three or four days the family had to go to a merchant and beg for some food. They owed money for food. That is the normal thing in rural and other areas of Canada, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people, and certainly the Minister and the Government of Canada, do not realize this.

I recall the time when the Government of Canada, under the auspices of this Minister, changed the place of issuance of the Canada pension disability cheques from St. John's, Newfoundland to Ottawa. All of a sudden the Government discovered, when it changed the system on March 31, that the cheques did not arrive on time. The Government blamed the delay on the mail. But Members of Parliament received phone calls, as I did from one lady, who said that for the first time in her life she had to go to the local merchant, whom she disliked intensely, to ask if she could charge her food because she did not get the Canada pension disability cheque on time.

Under consideration in this debate today is the family allowance cheque that a person gets on a certain day. Hon. Members of the House of Commons on all sides of the House may find it difficult to understand, although the majority of them in this Chamber know exactly what I am talking about, that the family allowances cheque which does not come on the anticipated day causes mayhem in that household. The bills cannot be paid. The children cannot eat. We are not talking here about clothing or school books; we are talking about

absolute daily necessities of life. That is what is wrong with this Bill.

● (1115)

I would like to refer back to what the Minister and members of the Progressive Conservative Party of this country have said during the election campaign and after—

Mr. Malone: Read the polls.

Mr. Baker: The Hon. Member says to read the polls. His is a Government that operates by polls. If you analyse the polls, Mr. Speaker, you will discover that the Progressive Conservative Party picked up 6 per cent but the New Democratic Party went down 6 per cent. So just imagine that Party bragging about the polls when it apparently got its support because of the shift of support from the New Democratic Party. But this is a Government of contradictions, anyway.

I would like to get back to my point now, Mr. Speaker, without any more interruptions from the Hon. Member from Alberta. The Minister of National Health and Welfare can satisfy his Party's position prior to the election campaign. He can satisfy what he said in this Chamber as it appears on the official record last December, 1984, that the social programs could not be used for deficit reduction. I will give the Minister an honest suggestion. Why not take the amount of money he is saving by reducing the family allowance and add it to the cheques of the poor people in this country? When the analysis is made of the child tax credit, why not add more on to the family allowances? If he is so concerned about poor people as he claims in this Chamber, why not add that money to the monthly family allowances cheques of those poor people whom he professes to support? That is an obvious solution for the Minister. But I am sure the Minister cannot do that because he is tied into a system of deficit reduction. It is deficits, deficits, deficits. Yet, the Government is steadily increasing the deficit at an alarming rate. Why is it doing that, Mr. Speaker? Because the Government has friends. It can give away \$15 billion to the oil industry and we will see an increase in gas and oil prices.

Mr. Malone: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: The Hon. Member is laughing. The Government can put up a billion dollars to bail out a bank or it can put up any amount of money for anything it wishes. At the same time the Government says it wants to reduce the deficit and that is why it is taking money away from the monthly family allowance cheques of Canadian mothers. What an outrageous claim that is on the part of the Government of Canada!

Surely, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) of this country can do better than that. Surely they have some heart. Surely they can at least try to comply with the promises they made prior to getting elected.

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, I know the Hon. Member is aware of the fact—and he referred to this in his comments—