

Family Allowances Act

Mr. Macdonald (Edmonton East):—of the federal health program and other social security measures as they pertain to the province of Alberta. I would not have spoken at some length upon this matter if it had not been for a question by the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Johnston), who is now speaking.

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, I suppose because there is likelihood of an election in the offing that my hon. friend was a little more persuaded to make the speech he did. That thought particularly runs in my mind, having listened to the way he praised the federal government for all the money they were spending not only in other parts of Canada but in Alberta. Of course the hon. member is going to be re-elected in Alberta, he hopes.

An hon. Member: Sure he will.

Mr. Johnston: I could not help but be impressed that the whole emphasis of his speech was on the amount of money that the federal government had spent in Alberta and how little the provincial government had spent. As a matter of fact the hon. member should have gone on to point out that the federal government has not spent any money in Alberta other than that which they got from the province, and they got much more than they gave back in the form of services. I was amazed at the hon. member for Edmonton East when he said that we really could not afford at this time to provide another \$192 million for family allowances for the needy people of Canada. I think that is the amount he stated would be involved in this increase. For the last two or three weeks, Mr. Speaker, the house has been discussing thefts in the armed forces which probably amount to a great deal more than that and yet members on the government side have said: Oh well, you have got to expect such thefts. What is a few million dollars here and there when the thefts are by members of the armed forces including those of higher ranks or, indeed, by people in other positions? Yet we cannot afford \$192 million or people who are in dire need of assistance. Why, we must be a poverty-stricken nation if \$192 million will bankrupt us.

The hon. member spoke about \$1½ million being given to Alberta for family allowances alone. That may be true. I have not got the figures with me. I do not have a prepared speech before me as did the hon. member. It must not be forgotten, however, that the 1½ million was taken from the province of Alberta by the federal government in the form of taxes before they gave back this altry amount. As the hon. member for

[Mr. Johnston.]

Peace River (Mr. Low) says, they are giving back somebody else's money. Nobody is trying to belittle what the federal government has done toward inaugurating a national health plan, but there again let me remind hon. members that it was a Liberal government that promised in 1919 to do something about a national health plan, and that after all these years we would not have got to the place where we are now if it had not been for constant prodding by the members of the opposition.

I do not hesitate for a moment to give the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) all the credit that is due him for providing such assistance to the people of Canada in the form of health services as he has made available. I do not say this to flatter him—I do not often flatter anybody on that side of the house—but I think he would have gone much further if he had been permitted to do so. The hon. member for Edmonton East spoke about \$2 million being provided for hospitals in Alberta under the national health plan. I suppose the figure of \$2 million is correct, but that only goes to show how much the province of Alberta has done on its own, and that province is only one out of ten. When the federal government gave \$2 million for hospitalization that was also the amount that the province of Alberta put up because it was on a fifty-fifty basis.

I am glad that the hon. member for Edmonton East used the province of Alberta for purposes of comparison because it stands far ahead of any other province in the Dominion of Canada so far as health services are concerned, and Saskatchewan of course follows along closely behind. Alberta has taken the lead in the field of health services, so it is no wonder that the hon. member for Edmonton East can boast of what the province has done for the health of its people. It has not only done that but it has paved the way for all the rest of Canada. You know, Mr. Speaker, it is a peculiar thing to me when I hear some members on the government side get up and make excuses as to why we cannot increase the family allowance. They point out that the federal government is giving old age pensions of \$40 a month without a means test. I would not be too proud of that. The other day I was speaking to old age pensioners in Calgary and they were asking for increased pensions. One old fellow got up and said, "We hardly have enough to eat". It seemed rather peculiar that there should be people in that audience who were actually hungry.

Mr. Whiteside: Give them some Social Credit money.