

itself, that we are members one of another, and that, if any part of the community suffers because of subnormal conditions, sooner or later other parts of the same community will suffer likewise. You cannot have one section of the nation undernourished, ill-clothed and unequal to its daily tasks, and not have the rest of the nation sooner or later suffer as a consequence.

Senator Murray: That is why we are targeting the new child tax credit.

Senator Hébert: Oh, yes, we know that!

Honourable senators, I am certain that all of you agree with the basic tenure of this quotation, and that given the scope and implications of Bill C-80, these are words which the Conservatives ought to heed.

In any event, when the House of Commons finally voted on the Family Allowance Bill on that memorable day in 1944, not one single dissenting voice was raised. All members of Parliament seemingly realized that family allowances were the most effective means of providing an income supplement.

Over the years the tax system continued to evolve to the benefit of families with children. By 1972, for instance, the Liberal government introduced a child care expense deduction to help working parents offset the cost of raising children.

Senator Murray: We improved that in the last budget, too.

Senator Hébert: You have improved so many things in the last eight years, it is incredible!

Senator Gigantès: You are pushing us into a depression, and that, too, is evident.

Senator Hébert: Moreover, the Family Allowances Act was amended in 1973 to further ease the financial burden of raising children and to increase equality of opportunity for children regardless of the economic condition of their families. Again in 1978, the Liberal government restructured child benefits to circumvent problems pertaining to low income families. With little or no taxable income, these families could not benefit from existing tax exemptions and deductions. Therefore, the federal government introduced the refundable child tax credit which provided a maximum benefit of \$200 per child per year.

Senator LeBlanc: That was Monique Bégin.

Senator Hébert: As you can see, Canada's family allowance programs have followed a very specific course. Since their inception, each change brought to these programs helped alleviate the cost of raising a family. These changes reinforced universality and the commitment of the national government to Canadian families. Unfortunately, since the Tories were swept to power in 1984 —

Senator Murray: And in '88.

Senator Hébert: —this course has been altered and child benefits have been spiralling downwards to virtual oblivion.

Senator Frith: We will sweep them out of power.

Senator Hébert: As I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the Conservatives are playing a smoke-and-mirrors game with the figures. For example, the government claims that the new benefit will add \$400 million a year to the current annual federal assistance to families, a five-year total of \$2.1 billion. This estimate conveniently ignores the fact that the government subtracted more than \$3.5 billion from the child benefit systems between 1986 and 1991.

Senator LeBlanc: Shame!

Senator Murray: Talk about smoke and mirrors!

Senator Hébert: At first glance this bill appears to be acceptable. The government claims that Bill C-80 will simplify tax returns, that it will maintain more generous benefits for children under seven and for large families. It sounds good. As well, the government pretends that it will increase the incomes of families with lower revenues. Accordingly, most families in the \$30,000 to \$50,000 range may expect as little as \$4 more a month for their children.

However, all is not as it seems in Toryland. To help illustrate the dishonesty of this bill, I wish to draw the attention of my honourable colleagues to an article from the April 1992, issue of *The Catalyst*, a publication of citizens for public justice. The article says:

Under the current system the poorest Canadian —

Senator Frith: Words like "justice" make them laugh; did you notice that?

Senator Hébert: Yes, and "human rights". Last week, it was "human rights" that made them laugh.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: Who was the author?

Senator Hébert: It reads:

Under the current system, the poorest Canadian families, those receiving social assistance or unemployment insurance payments will not receive an increase in their benefits. Under the current system, these families receive annual family allowance payments of \$419 per child, and a refundable tax credit of \$601, for a total of \$1,020 per child. The new child tax credit will give them \$1,020 per child, exactly the same benefit as the current system. The only additional funds are in the form of an earned income supplement for families that are employed and earn more than \$3,750 annually. For every \$100 earned over \$3,750, these families will receive an additional \$8, up to a yearly maximum of \$500. Once annual earnings reach more than \$20,921, the earnings supplement will be decreased and will disappear completely at the point where annual income is \$25,921 or more.

Senator Frith: That is one of the improvements. Another Senator Murray improvement!

Senator Hébert: Honourable senators, the government's duplicity is exposed in the glaring light of day. This new