

Family Allowances Act, 1973

the Government, after all calculations are made of what the Minister is achieving through this legislation, is \$15 million.

I sat at the committee hearings and listened to the Minister discussing her priorities. In answer to a question from a Member on the committee about whether or not she supported the purchase of BP by Petro-Canada—a \$600-million purchase—she very clearly stated that in her mind it was more important than maintaining the same level of indexation on Family Allowance.

Miss Bégin: That is a complete lie.

Mr. Gurbin: The Minister suggests that I may not have been telling the truth. The Minister is a very good politician. She has her own sense of morality and ethics and she will have to read her own words in the committee minutes if she wants to know whether she said that.

Miss Bégin: It is a complete lie. Is that clear enough?

Mr. Gurbin: She may not be concerned if she said that because I do not think she is concerned about very many of her statements. She recently said in the House that she was having negotiations with provincial ministers which were ongoing negotiations. Every provincial minister to whom we have talked has denied having any kind of negotiation with the Minister for some time, except in a negative manner.

This Minister's priorities become clear when she states that in her view it is more important to purchase BP for \$600 million to support Petro-Canada's purchase of other oil interests at a greater cost to Canadians, including those from whom she has taken money, than maintaining indexation. Since she has established her priorities in this way, I must question whether she is the most appropriate Minister to act on behalf of the welfare systems in Canada. We have a good welfare system in Canada, but if the Minister responsible for it allows her priorities to support the purchase of a \$600-million gas station rather than a Family Allowance system, for which support had been promised by her and others in her Party, I question whether the people of Canada are in the best hands. This is matter which Canadians must seriously question.

The third matter I would like to discuss concerns universality. I have heard the Minister often speak about her concept of universality and dedication to it. I do not know what dictionary the Minister uses because the concept of universality has been gone for a long time. Universality no longer exists in the national health care system, and its concept is disappearing from tax credits. It has disappeared from the Guaranteed Income Supplement. The Minister is supporting in words something to which none of her actions recently have lent any credibility. It may make good political sense to argue for the concept of universality while introducing measures at the same time, particularly this one and the Old Age Security measure, which completely deny that concept.

I realize that some of these programs are not ones we can easily afford, but this brings us back to the question of priorities and the orientation of the Government. I do not believe

that the Minister should indicate her support for universality while gradually eroding the base of that universality through measures such as we see before us at this time.

The final point I would like to discuss deals with the pressures being felt by Canadians who receive various forms of social assistance. I originally indicated that one reason for these many pressures is inflation and high interest rates. There are many families experiencing these pressures since many more Canadians have fallen below the poverty line, and the Minister has guaranteed that many more will follow as a result of the measures she is introducing now and the ones she has supported in the past. This pressure comes as a result of various forms of legislation which she has continually supported. For example, she has supported legislation introduced under the National Energy Program. This does not involve legislation for the purchase of service stations. She can support that, if she wishes. It concerns legislation that increases the Government's share of what Canadians pay at the gas pump. Presently, 35 per cent of what Canadians pay at the pump goes to the Government of Canada. That accounts for approximately \$12 billion. This amount, which Canadians are paying into the Government coffers, I assume, is used to buy gas stations, among other things. This was done to pay for many years of mismanagement and, I am sorry to say, misrepresentation by the Minister of National Health and Welfare to that constituency which she has an obligation to serve. I believe she is clearly eroding the universality that she professes to support. I think that even she must admit to that fact. I think that this is legislation which, at the very least, should be minimized by the amendment which my colleague, the Hon. Member for Calgary West, has entered.

• (2120)

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver-Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I am feeling the urge to rise in support of the amendment to Bill C-132 as proposed by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes), which seeks to remove the 5 per cent cap on the increases to Family Allowances in 1984. I must confess to being at least partially moved by the activity to my left, from the region of the NDP.

An Hon. Member: We'll keep you moving, too.

Mr. Clarke: I suppose I was really a little bit upset and amazed, more than anything, by comments by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie). He seems to be much less interested in the debate since he has disappeared, along with his Leader and most of his caucus.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: Who? What is this nonsense?

Mr. Clarke: I am pleased to see that—

Mr. Keeper: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Hon. Member would explain what he meant when he said that most of our caucus is gone, when there are