

When the Social Service Council of Canada raised this question, a general meeting was called to discuss the matter in our city, well and largely attended, and after a very exhaustive discussion, and thought, the resolution was adopted that our meeting was opposed to family allowances, at any rate at the present state of Canada's development; and there was not one single dissenting voice in that rather large conference. I am here then to present to you the views of that group. It may also be significant, in view of the fact that I am also presenting my own views, that I at the moment am President of the Social Workers Club of the city of Toronto.

Social workers are tremendously interested in people. That is our job. We are peculiarly interested very much in their material prosperity and welfare; but we are interested even more, I take it, in their psychological, in their spiritual and in their intangible values: The whole of modern social work, I think, can be said to be built upon the development of character and personality, whereas in the old days all that social workers thought of was a matter of relief. Relief, of course, sometimes is an essential thing, but the thing that we are driving at, the thing that we think is of value in our people—of greatest value in our people—are the qualities that make them different from the brute beast, the qualities that make one people different from another, and we are extremely careful that certain of the simpler qualities, certain of the more important qualities should not be lost. Among those that we consider as being very essential are self-reliance and independence.

Q. All the qualities underlying character?—A. Yes. Now, Miss Whitton has covered a great deal of that. I am not going to argue this case. I am merely mentioning certain things. We consider, as I say, very, very important indeed, those qualities of self-reliance and self-dependence, and we consider in our North American civilization, as being second in importance, the responsibility for the family group. First, responsibility for oneself, then responsibility for the family group as an entity. Our whole effort in modern social work is to build up those two things. Other things are incidental. And we see in such a proposal as this, as Miss Whitton has very aptly pointed out, a measure that would cut under both self-reliance and family responsibility. One could elaborate that with very considerable length. I have notes that would carry you much farther, but I know that you want to get through.

We are interested not only in this side of the peoples' welfare, but we are interested very, very much indeed to know, and to see, that they shall have a decent living condition, a decent living wage. There is nobody in the community, I think, that knows as well as your social worker how the people have to live, or how some of the people have to live at any rate; and there is no group that you can depend upon so absolutely to back up any pressure that can be exerted on any industry, anything that can make for greater efficiency, either in the worker or in the industry itself, anything that can make for the better remuneration of labour, because we know what miserable pittances are paid in some cases. We know, of course, that in many cases the ability of the worker to perform has been diminished by handicap. There is no group that you can look to with greater confidence for support to measures that will provide sheltered employment and sheltered conditions for those who cannot perform up to a reasonable average. But I think you will find at the same time that your social workers will stand almost solid against anything that subsidizes industry as a whole, anything that would tend to remove responsibility from industry for meeting its big obligation.

Now, the proponents of this scheme of family allowances admit, I understand, freely, that it is merely a substitute for a decent living wage.

MR. WOODSWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I do not think that we will get very far by letting an expression of that kind go unchallenged. I do not think that any witness has made that statement.