

Family Allowances

In committee, too, we can hear more about other aspects. For example, I should like to have a little clearer explanation of the income tax aspects, having noted over the years so many faulty prognostications by so many departments of this government. I wonder how the minister can predict with such precision, as he did this afternoon, what the practical aspects of the bill will mean, without knowing how the fathers and mothers of the realm will decide who shall pay, who will claim, who will be the payer of the income tax. I think there might at least be some room for a little further study and reflection on that question.

We will also want to have this measure, which is but one measure in this field, more closely and meaningfully related to the goals set forth in the orange paper. We shall want some elucidation of the various new elements in this kind of measure. This is why I said earlier today that this was the kind of bill that required careful study in committee.

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I think the interim bill was very straightforward and very simply written. It was drafted in such a way as to bring about easy comprehension so that it could be disposed of quickly in the House in general debate. This bill requires a good deal more study. As I read it over with great care, I am prompted to ask further questions which are more suitable to the committee than to this chamber. I do not know, for instance, from the bill on what date the minister is to table his reports. I do not get any clear picture of the mechanism through which the federal government can recover any overpayments which may be made.

The interim bill, as we note en passant, has no terminal date, and I presume I should not be concerned about any administrative or other flaw which might prevent the operative enactment of this bill by the date set out by the minister, January 1. I presume the interim bill will carry on, and probably that is why no terminal date was put in. A very important and serious fault, indeed a grievous error, is the issue of the cost of living increase. The bill is inadequate in this regard and I am surprised that the inadequacy has not been corrected.

In the resumed session of August and September, measure after measure was brought forward in the House. The House was moved to bring in recommendations in respect of the cost of living. Measures were provided whereby these could be enacted. Now I find that this bill is deficient in this regard. There should be a clearcut provision to the effect that the recipients of family allowance will have given to them regularly and automatically a sum corresponding to the annual cost of living increase. Anything less than that is unjust, improper and shows a considerable unawareness of the issue when dealing with the public service, old age security pensioners and the rest.

I believe such an amendment should be moved. I hope the minister will recognize the need for it. If he does, he will have the support of this part of the House. We have always asked for that realism to be reflected in legislation. We always thought the 2 per cent was fantastic nonsense, and ask again for a realistic figure. We ask that the legislation be written clearly and simply so that there is no convoluted development of somebody reporting back to someone and someone else making a decision. Let this

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

provision be written in so that the people of Canada, the would-be recipients of these measures, know exactly where they stand. For whatever time is left to this government they can be pretty sure there will be a lot of inflation, so they should have it written in. I think this is a very important and prudent suggestion.

I should like to speak longer on the bill, but I want to give ample time to the honourable and venerable member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I always enjoy hearing from him on these measures, and also the representative of the Social Credit party. I say again that I hope we will soon be in committee, where we can study this measure and hear further from the minister on this bill which has considerable complexity and, while it is not by any means an answer to the inflationary evils which stalk the land, is something which for what good it will do we can welcome. To advance that good we will expedite the bill, giving it our reasonable consideration.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we welcome Bill C-211. We welcome it because it will put additional dollars into the income of all the families of the country in which there are children. We welcome it also because the principle upon which this bill is based is essentially sound. Like the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), speaking as one venerable member to another, I like the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) much better when he is Dr. Jekyll than when he is Mr. Hyde. Today he was the doctor. Today he had a good case, and he did not spoil it by attempts to make partisan capital out of this piece of legislation.

I have referred to my friend the hon. member for Hillsborough in making this allusion to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I may say I shall probably come back to my friend from Hillsborough a little later, but at the moment I should like to draw attention to the fact that in the five minutes he had before five o'clock he certainly let the cat out of the Tory bag. To him this bill and the measure to increase old age security were welfare. That is all, just welfare. I do not mind his castigating the other ministers of the Liberal government for their failure to cope adequately with economic problems, but if that is all he understands about universal old age security, if that is all he understands about universal family allowances, namely, that these measures are welfare, I pity this country if my friend the hon. member for Hillsborough is ever minister of national health and welfare. As I say, I shall come back to that matter a little later.

First of all, there is another word or two I should like to say about my friend Dr. Jekyll, the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I really enjoyed his speech today, as I enjoyed his speech of January 11 and several other speeches he has made, unlike other speeches which I shall not mention at this time. As I listened to him today, making it clear that he has an appreciation of social policy, that he understands what he is doing when he brings in improved old age pensions and improved family allowances, and when he tells us about changes to be made in the Canada Pension Plan, I realized that he was having a pretty good time.

I think the minister was genuine in his joy in making the speech he made this afternoon. But I found myself