

Family Allowances Act

school opens when parents are told: You will have to buy running shoes for your children, gym suits, dictionaries, various items the young need to attend school. And you can read their expression, those people are all sad because they have to make a choice as to what they can or cannot afford to buy for their children. It is unfortunate because not only will those children not have what others enjoy at school but they will not be able to participate in various activities such as minor hockey or figure skating. They are indeed pushed aside and that is what really hurts, to realize that one is not as well off as the others.

Mr. Speaker, all Hon. Members have to listen to their constituents to appreciate the fact that many of them have needs and that something has to be done about it.

Far from improving the living conditions of our constituents, the constituents of all the Members here, this Bill will make matters worse. It simply does not make sense, Mr. Speaker.

That is why I cannot let the Government have free reins. As we did last spring, we have to stop it or else the future of this country will be hopelessly jeopardized.

Mr. Speaker, I am giving this Government a very serious warning on behalf of the people of New Brunswick. I urge you to reconsider your position and not to reduce family allowances.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I most sincerely hope the Government will change its mind and do so before the people are forced to protest and demonstrate vigorously as they have shown they can during the debate on old age security pensions deindexation. The people of New Brunswick, both men and women, then joined forces with all other Canadians to tell the Government that it was being unfair. If need be, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to help them launch the same kind of demonstration to prove to this Conservative Government that this Bill is unfair.

● (1550)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria).

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question. First, I would like to congratulate my colleague for Westmorland-Kent (Mr. Robichaud) on his excellent speech this afternoon.

I would also like to ask him two questions. Does he believe that the Government has its priorities right when it spends \$56 million to buy new, different colour uniforms for the Armed Forces instead of spending \$55 million to preserve family allowances for Canadians? Second, could he tell us why, in his opinion, the Conservative Members are participating so little, if at all, in the debate on such an important matter?

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, naturally, the questions of my Hon. colleague are not that difficult to answer. In fact, the

priorities of this Government are completely upside down, because it thinks it is absolutely impossible to find any money to help the less privileged, such as low-income families.

This is ridiculous, especially when billions of dollars, or \$1,000 million, can be found to help businesses which are already well-off, such as the multinationals. To come back to the question asked by my colleague, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that \$500 million were found to build an icebreaker to preserve Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. I am quite in favour of protecting our territory, but it is strange that so much money could be found to build an icebreaker, and it is even stranger that all this was brought about by the actions of our great friends south of our border.

As for the non-participation of Government Members in this debate, the Minister himself did not have that many good things to say when he introduced his Bill yesterday. When it should have been the turn of Government Members to speak, they had absolutely nothing to say. They simply skipped their turn. I understood this morning why Government Members did not speak to this Bill yesterday. It is simply because they had nothing to say. The Hon. Member for Bellechasse (Mr. Blais) was content this morning with commenting on what had been said the day before without adding anything new. He only commented on the speeches made the day before.

Mr. Speaker, in reply to the second question, I would say that Conservatives simply have nothing to add and cannot defend the position of the Minister as reflected in this Bill.

[English]

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, so as not to disappoint the Hon. Member and his colleagues, I thought we should have some participation by government Members. I already participated in the debate and comments previously, but I want to put a question to the Hon. Member.

He is well aware, of course, that this particular measure before the House is only part of a package regarding family benefits. The other parts of the package include not only the family allowance but also the child tax credit and the child tax exemption under the Income Tax Act. All of those make up the total family benefit package. As the Hon. Member knows, the net effect of all of those and the changes being proposed will increase the benefits for those low income families which the Hon. Member spoke about so eloquently and actually decrease benefits for the high income families.

I would be interested in knowing from the Hon. Member what the official Liberal Party policies are with respect to all three parts of the family benefit package, taking into account the question of the deficit and our difficulty with the \$35 billion deficit funding. What are the specific and official policies of the Liberal Party to deal with all of those matters and still benefit the low income people that he and I are both concerned about?