

House to pass this bill so that the families of Canada, especially the middle and lower income families, could begin enjoying the new benefits by the target date of May, 1972. Clause 3(4) of the bill now before the House provides:

No benefit is payable under this Act for any month in a benefit year for which an allowance is payable under the *Family Allowances Act*.

In other words, it is entirely at the discretion of the government when extra benefits will be available for the mothers of Canada, whereas under the previous bill a specific target date was set. Frankly, we are suspicious of the government's intentions in this regard. We suspect it is trying to play politics with this bill and save it as a tidbit before the election.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: I submit that because of the mismanagement of the business of the House, a mismanagement of which the government is guilty, this House, according to the rules and precedents which I have referred to in my point of order, is prevented from proceeding with Bill C-170 until Bill C-169 receives Royal Assent.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I tell the hon. member that I will have no difficulty ruling on the point of order he has raised. If other hon. members want to express their opinions, I will listen to them, although I do not think I will have much difficulty in ruling on the point. Of course, I do not want to prejudge the point, and if any hon. member wishes to add to the interesting point of order raised by the hon. member for St. John's East, I will listen. If not, I will give my ruling.

There being no objection, I will proceed. May I begin by referring to the well known rule to which the hon. member for St. John's East alluded. The long established practice of the House is that the House should not be asked to pronounce itself on a question in the same session on which the House has already decided or expressed itself, either by negative or positive vote. That rule, of course, applies to legislation which is proposed to the House within a single session. If a particular item of legislation is proposed to the House on which there is a decision, either in favour or against, it is against the rules and long established practices of this parliament and other parliaments to ask that the House decide again the same question or reconsider the same legislative proposal in the same session.

However, so far as I know, no decision has been taken by this House in the current session, which began a few days ago, which would preclude anyone from proposing legislation of the nature before us at present. May I also indicate to hon. members that there is nothing wrong procedurally with bringing forward two legislative proposals dealing with the same subject. If hon. members will look at our parliamentary papers they will see that on many occasions, and almost at any time, a number of legislative proposals were before the House dealing with the same subject. Of course, once a decision has been reached on one of those legislative proposals, then the House has decided and, within the same session—this does not apply to the following session—it would be irregular to ask the House to look at the same legislative

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proposal in order that there might be a new or renewed debate. That might lead us into the strange situation in which, within the same session, the House might reach two decisions on that proposal, one being contrary to the other. That is the logic behind the long standing practice and rule to which the hon. member alluded. I do not think it is possible for the Chair to agree that this very valid rule should be extended to the point where it would preclude the consideration of the bill now before us.

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare) moved that Bill C-170, to provide for the payment of benefits in respect of children, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on Bill C-170, which is now at the second reading stage, I should like to refer to the white paper tabled in this House over one year ago. In referring to family allowances, it pointed out that family allowances have lost their effectiveness over the years, as benefits have remained almost unchanged since their inception despite sharp increases in the cost of living. It further pointed out that, although the payments are a welcome addition to the limited incomes of poor families, the size of the allowance is relatively small. As a result, the white paper pointed out that the program has had a limited anti-poverty effect.

Payments per child of \$72 to \$120 a year, in essence the level of payments which our present family allowance program provides, cannot come near the annual cost of maintaining a child. It is estimated, for instance, that in 1971, about 24 per cent of family and youth allowance expenditures was paid to families with less than \$5,000 income, and 76 per cent to families with incomes above this level. Many suggestions have been made in recent years that the family allowances program be made selective rather than universal. It is argued that money used to pay benefits to well-to-do families should be used to increase substantially the benefits payable to low income families.

Increasing the benefits within the existing structure, in other words, following along the philosophy of the present family allowance program, undeniably would involve massive increases in expenditures. One must take into account that current coverage involves almost 7 million children. When one takes into account the seven million children, and if we proceed along the universal route as presently embodied in the family allowance, each dollar added on to the present family allowance rates, again if universal, would mean additional expenditures of \$82 million a year. To double the present rates would cost an additional \$560 million. That is not counting youth allowances. With youth allowances providing coverage now for 670,000 youths, each dollar added to the youth allowances would mean an additional \$8 million a year. To double the amount of this benefit, that is the youth allowances, would require another \$80 million.

• (1240)

We see the tremendous expenditures involved when we start to double the rates and benefits under the present family allowances if we just double them and make them universal. We all know there are many other competing