

Family Allowances Act

people. The higher cost of living is, at least to some extent, the result of wages being higher, of the prices paid for the produce of primary producers being higher than they were at the time the act was first brought in. Parents have more money; they have more dollars today than they had when the cost of living was 100. That may not be the whole answer to the problem which the hon. member is trying to solve, but I think it must be taken into consideration as being quite a factor.

The example I am about to give is taken out of thin air and may not be entirely tied to facts. Let us assume that the cost of living is up 100 per cent and at the same time that the income in dollars of a family is up 75 per cent. You cannot maintain exactly the balance that you had at the base period by raising the family allowance to take care of the cost of living index unless at the same time you make some allowance for the income increase. I do not know how that formula can be worked out, but I do say that the assumption that people earn no more in current dollars than they did in 1939 dollars while the cost of living has gone up by approximately 100 per cent is surely not correct.

In his speech, more than in his resolution, I regret to say that the hon. member for Assiniboia gave me the impression he was rather pounding upon what I am afraid has been the theme of his party for recent years, that is—give, give, give. They have advocated, doubtless at times quite justifiably, increased family allowances, increased old age pensions, disablement pensions, health insurance, relief for the needy and so on and so on. I favour them all; we all do. But unfortunately the same opposition—it is all opposition—which day after day hounds us on this side to approve resolutions advocating the expenditure of millions of dollars are continuing to needle, perhaps not me but the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) and others to reduce the tax burden.

I do not think anyone wants to take a hard and fast line and say that nothing can be increased or that no tax can be reduced, but, my goodness, we have to use some judgment. We have to decide what are the important things that we want to increase before we can decide what there is going to be in the way of reductions. I think it was the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Thomas) who stated that greater assistance can be given to the heads of families by increasing the income tax deductions for children than by a 60 per cent increase in family allowances.

Unfortunately the situation is that if we are going to carry out all the requests which

have been made by my hon. friends of the C.C.F. we will eventually land in one position only: the government will take the whole of the pay cheque in taxes and then undertake to feed, clothe and shelter the people of Canada. I do not think that we want that. I have pointed out that danger and we are getting closer to it all the time.

That does not mean for one minute that anybody on this side is suggesting that we have not a continuing duty to correct inequalities which involve hardship for certain classifications of our people. Sometimes the groups upon which these hardships are inflicted are fairly small in number and not very vocal. We must not overlook that there may be some of them who are far less in number than are the heads of families. I should think that to ensure that those inequalities and hardships are removed is a more pressing problem at the moment, with the Canadian economy as it is, than to increase family allowances.

So far as an increase in family allowances is concerned, I feel that, as long as we have the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin), as soon as an increase in family allowances is feasible and desirable, we will get it.

Mr. C. E. Johnston (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on this resolution. I had no intention whatever of saying anything but some remarks that have been made make it necessary for me to say a word or two on this occasion. The hon. member for Edmonton East (Mr. Macdonald) went out of his way to make certain remarks to which I want to refer.

An hon. Member: Facts.

Mr. Johnston: For the most part he read from a prepared speech, although he said that he would not have spoken if it had not been for certain references made by the hon. member who moved the motion and the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Thomas).

Mr. Macdonald (Edmonton East): I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Johnston: The greater proportion of his speech was prepared, and outside of a few interjections—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member is rising on a question of privilege.

Mr. Macdonald (Edmonton East): I should like to make it clear that I was not reading from a prepared speech. I spoke extemporaneously from a wide knowledge of the question of social security that I gained from a particular study I made recently of the provisions—

Mr. Johnston: What is the privilege?