

Family Income Security Plan

• (2150)

As you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a great burden on some of the provinces, including my province, because of shortages of funds for welfare purposes. The writer continues:

We are again concerned, Mr. Minister, in reading Bill C-170 to learn that only one half of the maximum amounts under federal income security plan will be available to "children in care" because the maintenance of such children is being shared under the Canada Assistance Plan. The end result of this decision will mean, in Nova Scotia at least, that our "children in care" will be little better off than under current family allowances and youth allowance programs, and ironically less well off than many children eligible for federal income security plan benefits in homes of greater affluence.

So, these children who are already disadvantaged and have problems as a result of the situation in which they find themselves will not be helped at all by this so-called enlightened legislation, but will be in fact further disadvantaged. The letter then states:

Further, with reference to the Canada Assistance Plan, our provincial government has pointed out to you on several occasions that the beneficence of the Canada Assistance Plan is one thing to the citizens of Canada's wealthier provinces, but it is quite another matter to a province such as Nova Scotia.

So, again, this is being perpetrated not only by individuals of the state social strata but by the provinces themselves. The letter continues:

Under Bill C-170 which you introduced to the House of Commons on March 15, 1972, "children in care" will receive half the maximum amount, but any supplementation to increase the benefits to a more appropriate level will be dependent on the economic situation in a province rather than on individual or family need. This proposal is consistent with neither the principles of family allowance, which has established tradition in Canada nor the Canada Assistance Plan. Further, it does not seem to us to be an effective instrument to help improve the quality of life of children who have endured much suffering and privation.

Current federal income security plan proposals under Bill C-170 for the most part will help improve the economic situation and the quality of life of many needy and low income Canadian families and children. We endorsed the principle in September of last year and we do so again. However, for wards, for children in our special protection program—juvenile delinquency—and others in care the opportunity to improve the quality of their lives a little will be weighed very carefully against the wishes of an already heavily burdened Nova Scotia taxpayer.

In my province this legislation, which at first glance may appear to be enlightened, has very serious drawbacks when measured against the social fabric and particular economic needs of Nova Scotia. Of course, this goes without saying: it will apply to the provinces in the Atlantic region generally because in the Atlantic region Nova Scotia is perhaps one of the better off provinces. The letter continues:

Unfortunately the lobby for children in Halifax is no stronger than the lobby for children in Ottawa.

So the president of the Nova Scotia Family and Child Welfare Association is very concerned about the implications. He finishes his plea or submission to the minister by saying:

We urge you and your colleagues to review section 6, subsection (2) of Bill C-170, which limits Federal Income Security Plan benefits to "children in care", and we hope that the appropriate change will be made. We appreciate your consideration of our views.

[Mr. MacKay.]

It seems to me that of all the possible recipients of the beneficence, if you will, of the federal government, surely the pre-eminent people should be the children who are presently disadvantaged. Surely, if this government really cares for the principle of social equity and justice it must reconsider this particular section. If it does not do so, it seems to me the whole concept which prompted it to bring in legislation of this type will be nothing but a hollow mockery.

Again I ask the minister, if he has not already done so, to give every consideration to the submissions made by the Nova Scotia Family and Child Welfare Association and to reply to this group at his earliest possible convenience. I hope that when this bill goes to the committee, the minister will take a very good look at what this group has to say and will also consider some of the other very appropriate suggestions which have been put forward by hon. members who preceded me this evening.

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, in speaking on this subject at this late hour I have only very few comments to make. After hearing the submission of the hon. member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) I am reminded of the expression the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) uses quite often to describe the opposition of others. I believe the expression is "pusillanimous poppycock." This is what my friend from Papineau indulged in tonight. It reminded me of the words of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) with respect to at least 20 Quebec members having to go. The hon. member, on his performance, was a living example of the statement of the Prime Minister.

I was rather surprised that such a young member who I thought had progressive ideas would stand up and attempt to give an essentially cheap political harangue against the principles we have adopted in criticizing the bill. We have enunciated them so often that I would think they would have penetrated even the mind and heart of the minister himself. But I suppose he has difficulty in stopping smoking and probably in appreciating the principles which we have put forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

POST OFFICE—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON PROGRESS OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNIONS—REQUEST FOR RECOGNITION OF AQUATIC SPORTS BY ISSUANCE OF STAMP

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, in recent years there has been a decline in administrative efficiency in many government departments, the Unemployment Insurance Commission, and so on, but to no department does this apply more than the Post Office Department. I have been asking a series of questions on