

Family Allowances Act, 1973

[English]

Mr. Harquail: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I am sure you would be the first to agree that when a Member uses a term that is unparliamentary and suggests or imputes that somebody is not telling the truth, has not told the truth or refers to lying, it is incumbent upon the Chair and all Members to correct that. The Hon. Member said that the reason he was speaking *en français aujourd'hui* was to make sure that Members from the Province of Quebec were not able to continue to say things that would be considered not to be the truth. He suggested that some Member, unnamed, or all Members from Quebec were trying to mislead by not telling the truth. One of the benefits we will have under the new rules will be being able to question Members for ten minutes after they have spoken, if we want clarification.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I have listened attentively to the point raised by the Hon. Member for Restigouche (Mr. Harquail). That is definitely not a question of privilege. The matter referred to by the Hon. Member for Restigouche may be a point of order. However, I have listened attentively to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Calgary West and have not noticed any unparliamentary language.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I will provide to all Members opposite a transcript of the meeting held this morning with the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), where she indicated that spending on service stations is more important than Family Allowances. If Members opposite will put that in their Householder I will be glad to stand in this House and praise them for providing both sides of the story. However, if they do not do that, I will continue with my lessons until I reach a level of skill where I can be comfortable in telling the story myself as to what I find in the Health and Welfare Committee minutes.

When you interrupted me, Mr. Speaker, you were asking for relevance. We will be voting later this day on the second reading stage of Bill C-132. Before doing that, we will vote on a motion which I will propose. The relevance is as follows.

I would like to make it clear to the other side that, in a marketing sense, politics is never a one-way street. The difference between selling your point of view to the voters of this country and selling a car or sewing machine is that it is a two-way communication street. When I sell a car, I have the chance to tell my story, but there is no opposition to interpret it in a different way. In politics there is a one-way communication and it is rebutted by the other side. Therefore, it goes two ways.

I point out to Members opposite that the Cabinet is asking them to cut assistance to families and pensioners, reducing the amount of money which goes to those two groups. I remind Hon. Members that the Conservative Party under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has been rather skilled in the last two years in acquainting the Canadian public with what Liberal backbenchers have done.

I started by saying the Liberal Party backbenchers supported the original Constitution. We had the opportunity to tell

Canadians what was wrong with it. They believed us, it was eventually changed, and their popularity went down. We are the group in this House that rang the bells for democracy. Members opposite were prepared to support a non-democratic Cabinet. We rang the bells, Mr. Speaker, Canadians learned about the Liberal Party's lack of commitment to democracy and their popularity went down.

● (1240)

The Liberal backbenchers opposite supported the budget of the former Minister of Finance, and they did so at the beginning with a sense of positive voting behaviour. But our Leader and our caucus informed Canadians about the difficulties with that budget, the jobs which would be lost, the health concerns, and all of the things that were wrong, and gradually Canadians started to fight back. The popularity of the backbenchers on the other side fell.

I would like to remind those Hon. Members that we told them consistently that the National Energy Program was an economic disaster. It has cost jobs and foreign exchange. It is a disaster from start to finish. Because of its complexity Canadians did not believe us for a long time, but today they are very nervous about the support which Liberal backbenchers, as well as the New Democratic Party, gave to that program. As the economic mess worsens in this country, the popularity of these two Parties is going to go down and down, because we are telling Canadians where the source of the problem is.

With regard to political patronage and scandal, Joel Bell, Morris Strong, Jim Coutts and Keith Davey were unknown Canadians until we in this Party brought those names to the attention of Canadians, and in a manner which was not very pleasant. Because the Liberal backbenchers support that kind of Cabinet behaviour, their personal popularity in their ridings is going down.

Every voter in every riding in this country is going to find out who votes this afternoon and who votes next week to cut Family Allowances and pensions. We are going to tell them, Mr. Speaker, from the platform, in brochures, on radio and television that the Cabinet was supported by its backbenchers in cutting social programs at a time when Canadians have a real need and at a time of economic uncertainty, when stress-related illnesses are almost epidemic. The backbenchers opposite want to buy service stations instead of putting money in health and social programs.

I can understand the difficulty of the Hon. Members opposite in voting against the Government, throwing it out of office and going to the general electorate at a time when they have made so many mistakes as backbenchers, and I would like to give them a graceful way out. There is a graceful way of voting this afternoon which will not turf out the Government, but will simply delay the cut in Family Allowances. All they have to do is vote for the following motion. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Leeds-Grenville (Mrs. Cossitt):

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor: