

*Family Allowances*

defence of the government's hopeless handling of inflation in this country, 21 times. He made those references in the context of saying that the bill before the House today, Bill C-223, was one of the government's ways of combating inflation in this country. We are surely entitled, on this side of the House, to call that type of representation what it is—misrepresentation.

In this context I think the House should be reminded of the minister's words in his maiden speech in the House on January 11. After pointing out that he felt it was almost sacred in the House that those in government follow the advice of the 264 delegates of the Canadian people who were sharing the government's task, the minister went on to say, as reported at page 197 of *Hansard*:

I believe the highest honour that can be conferred on one of its members is that of being recognized by his colleagues as a true House of Commons man. As I begin my parliamentary career, I can only express the hope that one day my colleagues will be kind enough to give me such an honour.

Whoever is chalking up the tally in anticipation of the conferral of such honour, I hope they chalk up against the minister what he did in the dying hours of the debate last evening.

It is strange what nine months can do to a minister. Nine months to the day of his saying those words he has become an arrogant, Trudeau cabinet minister. Perhaps the thing I take greatest exception to is not whether the minister misused the rules of the House in making his interjection but that the minister made new misrepresentations. I refer to a statement of his to the effect that the official opposition has been well known over the years for its opposition to any move to increase family allowances. How could the minister make that statement on the same day that my colleague, speaking as the main critic for our party, said in the debate he was concerned that the minister may not be able to bring in the bill contemplated earlier—that is, the \$20 average family allowance bill—in time for January, 1974? My colleague concluded by saying, as reported at page 6424 of *Hansard*:

For our part we shall support this measure. Faint as it is, it does help, and we wish to help these people as much as possible.

In spite of that statement by my colleague, we have the minister misrepresenting to the House, according to his language, that this party has always stood in the way of family allowance advances. Having said that, I believe it is interesting to go a little further and to say, if the minister is sincere in what he says, that I wish he had introduced in the bill now before the House a provision that would at least have restored to the families of Canada the buying power that their family allowances had when the Conservative government was in power in this country. The minister has put a deflator on the \$12 proposed in this bill. If the figure were deflated to the 1960 period, it would be found to be actually 50 cents short of regaining to those who received family allowance the buying power it had in the years of Conservative government in this country.

● (1530)

Think of it. Here we have a minister who comes into this House and, without admitting that it is his government's mishandling of the economy that has caused inflation, expects us to accept as a kind of magnanimous gesture an increase which does not even restore the buying power of

[Mr. Stevens.]

family allowances to what it was in the years of the previous Tory government in this country. To put it another way, this gesture represents an increase of, not \$12—let us not forget this—but \$4.80, which is 15 cents per day, per child. That is what the minister expects us to jump up and down about and exclaim, “aren't they tremendous in their anxiety to help families in this country?”

I raise these points because, while we are not opposed to an increase in family allowances, we think family allowances should be put on a basis as contemplated in the bill which, hopefully, will be introduced shortly, that is, to take into account deflation or inflation as the case may be. It is totally wrong for the minister in introducing the bill in this House to pretend that somehow this is a measure designed to fight inflation, and to suggest that this is something the government is doing in the best interests of Canada, without admitting that it is his government's mishandling of the economy which has resulted in those who receive family allowances requiring such an increase.

Having said that—I know this will embarrass the government and the minister—in June of this year the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which represents 24 countries including the United States, Japan, France, West Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Britain, stated in a report that the consumer price index for food had risen more sharply in Canada than in seven other industrialized countries in the 12-month period ending in June. Those are the facts, and surely we in the opposition have the right to point them out and to insist that the minister discontinue his tendency of misrepresenting those facts to the House.

I would add that the same report also stated that the performance of the United States was the best in respect of all goods and services, yet we constantly find that, rather than introducing measures in this House that would contain inflation, this government only offers measures to relieve its effects, and some measures that indeed contribute to inflation. On that point, I would remind hon. members that on the twenty-first occasion on which the minister referred to inflation in his introductory remarks, he stated:

The government continues working to provide the best form of income security possible, and that is a reduction of the rate of inflation itself.

I should like to see concrete evidence of the steps the government is taking to reduce inflation. It is not enough for the government to give us another twist to that old slogan “The land is strong” by simply saying “Lalonde is strong”. This country deserves better government than it has received in the past ten years. The evidence of mishandling is there and it is important that we should not be confused. The bill before us is a measure which simply relieves. I might add that it does not entirely restore the loss in buying power of those who receive family allowances. I say that because the increase is 50 cents short of returning that buying power to its level during the previous Conservative government's days.

It is also interesting to note that if the buying power of family allowance recipients was to be restored to the level of 1946 when family allowances were first introduced, we would be considering an average allowance of \$19.35 as opposed to \$12. That is why my colleague, the hon. member