

Family Allowances Act

allowance and of social support for the next generation, the children of today. We ask the Government not to deindex the family allowance. It should be kept where it is and Canadian families should be given the support they need.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald). In view of the presence in the House this afternoon of the Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Andre), does the Hon. Member agree with the priority of the Government or the priority of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Nielsen) in that it has \$56 million to buy new military uniforms but does not seem to have \$55 million to restore the family allowances which were just taken away?

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, my disagreement with the priorities of the Government in the area of expenditures goes well beyond expenditures on uniforms. I think the Government is misguided in many respects. I do not quite see the point of focusing on any one expenditure as being a misguided one. If I were the Minister of Finance, I would go for a massive change in the taxation system in order to have fair taxes. I would certainly want to find money in the many other ways which are available through tax reform, through seeing that corporations paid their fair share and through seeing that wealthy individuals paid their fair share. I would certainly give social programs a very much higher priority. However, I do not see the point in focusing on any one expenditure. I think the Government needs a massive realignment of its priorities, and that is what I would advocate.

[Translation]

Mrs. Killens: The Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) criticized the Liberal Government's 6 and 5 Program. May I remind the Hon. Member that without this program, interest rates would now still be at the double digit level? The federal Government appealed to all groups in our society, unlike Bill C-70 before the House today, which singles out one particular group. May I remind the House that we appealed to the elderly, parents, employers, business people and unions, and everyone helped to bring interest rates down to what they are today. I think it was a great victory for the Liberal Party and should not be referred to as a black mark on the record of the Liberal Government.

Does the Hon. Member have any alternatives to the steps we took at the time?

● (1550)

[English]

Ms. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We opposed the six and five program, which was a method of deindexing. I think we were right to oppose it and I think the Liberals have a great deal of gall to be so much in support of full indexing now when they were not in the past.

[Translation]

Mr. Blaikie: By the way, Mr. Speaker, your French is "dobra".

[English]

I wonder if the Hon. Member from Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) could elaborate. She mentioned the significance of the family allowance for Canadian women and referred to the battle which Canadian women and their allies here in Parliament waged with respect to their economic rights during the constitutional debate. Could she comment on the way in which this is now shaping up as a battle on the part of Canadian women for economic rights and the need for them to win this battle as well.

Ms. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there are some very important parallels between the two situations. First of all, the women of Canada, when they were engaged in the constitutional debate, were very worry of what the Government had proposed because women had been hurt very badly by provisions which Governments have brought in, such as in the Bill of Rights, and they were most insistent that there be strong wording and special protection to ensure that there were equal rights for women. I do not want to go into the details of this battle which are extremely interesting and we could certainly happily spend a great deal of time on them. But I think the point is that the Government of the day entirely underestimated Canadian women. It made some mistakes; they thought that these would blow over quickly, but in fact Canadian women did not let the Government forget about mistakes. They organized and they marched on Ottawa, they had meetings across the country and they lobbied their MPs. They did all of the normal political activities which Governments were not expecting women to be doing. They did them and they did them very successfully and indeed became a model to other pressure groups who were encouraged to see that the Government had to buckle under and change the wording of the Constitution, the Charter of Rights.

I think there are parallels here. I have already been in touch with some women's organizations. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has sent a wire on this subject. It is the umbrella group that represents most of the women of Canada. I have been in touch with representatives of the National Action Committee in Quebec, and of course there is going to be a big fight there. I think we are going to be seeing women across the country speaking out, because women who fought for their political rights do not want to lose their economic rights. Why did we win politically to lose economically? Women are going to see that and I think they are going to object.

It is not just going to be a women's fight, Mr. Speaker, because women and young people supported the old age pensioners in the fight last spring, and I think we are going to see the old age pensioners speaking up on this issue and indeed they have already begun and they are going to continue to do that. They will be supporting the women and families in this struggle. I think we are going to see a really interesting