

Family Allowances Act

Government attempted to make changes in the Old Age Security and thought that they might do it at the expense of a set of tired and sleepy targets that proved to be neither tired nor sleepy. The senior citizens rose up, with the support of the entire country, and the proposal to partially deindex old age pensions was a decision that had to be changed, and so full indexation was returned.

Now, looking around for easy targets and I suppose with a new dimension of sexism perhaps, certainly looking at children as easy targets, the Government thinks that it is going to attack women, children and families and not get a reaction. The reaction is already taking place. The reaction is manifestly affecting the attitude of the Government because the Minister stood up only moments ago and said "We have had enough of this, too many people may be aroused to what is going on, so we had better have closure." But it is too late. It is unnecessary and ridiculous. One would think we were talking about an extremely expensive program here. The fact of the matter is, by comparison to many of the programs that continue and in terms of some of the measures that this Government has already advocated and in terms of the savings that they hope to achieve, this program is trivial. It has been contracting, not only in terms of cost but benefits that have been going to citizens over the last few years. By the way, when the Member who spoke earlier asked this Chamber to think, I suppose it is worth noting that he ought to contemplate what was said by the Minister earlier and that is as a result of the actions of the past Government the family allowance was indeed cut several times over the last 15 years. The result, I will repeat what the Minister said, is that it amounts to only some \$30 instead of the \$50 it would have totalled per child if the former Government had not been as deliberate as this one in saving money at the cost of children, families and women.

Let us look at the record. Ten years ago family allowances consumed about 1.2 per cent of Gross National Product and 6.4 per cent of federal expenditures. Presently it consumes .57 per cent of the Gross National Product and 1.2 per cent of Government expenditures. In dollar terms we are talking about something like \$2 billion a year, just twice as much as we are going to have to put into the bank fiasco, just twice as much. In the first year of this partial deindexation the Government just may save as much as \$20 million. Not until 1990-1991 is it going to save as much as \$400 million. That is trivial compared to the \$1 billion that it is going to throw the way of the banks. It is certainly trivial compared to the amount of money that is going to go to the oil companies and it becomes a joke in its triviality compared to the tax expenditures benefiting the largest corporations which are not producing jobs in proportion to the amount of money going into those coffers.

● (1630)

Let us recognize that the Government, under the leadership of the Minister, in consultation with the other two Parties, did attempt to look at some changes which were purported to be to the advantage of women, the family and children. However, what was the net result? No attention has been paid to the

substantial changes in the tax structure that will affect people, whether or not they have children or are women. There has been partial deindexation all along the line. We should look at the pattern of changes to the child benefits.

What about the claim advanced by the Hon. Member for York East and by others yesterday that the poorest are going to be better off? I would just point out that in the first year, a family with two children making less than \$9,000 per year will lose \$22 in the first year and will make some gains until 1990 but after that will continue to lose. A family with two children and an income of between \$15,000 and \$35,000 per year—and the \$35,000 per year is about average—is going to lose simply on the basis of those changes in benefits.

Having heard some of the utterances of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), I am sure that he did not intend this to happen. He is groping around looking for a means by which he can modify things to some slight degree so that he can get back to a program that will fulfil the intentions that he has broadcast over this land. I would suggest that the first step would in fact be to withdraw or modify the Bill in committee. Better still, I would suggest that the Minister rise like a man who stands for the principles that he preaches to the country to support us in this six-month hoist.

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Lethbridge-Foothills): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I listened to what I think is the absolute height of hypocrisy supposedly on the part of the poor. I listened to the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) talking about—

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is my understanding that the terms "hypocrisy" and "hypocrite" or any term like that is considered unparliamentary language.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): It just depends how it's used.

Mr. Boudria: Only when referring to another Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair did not understand the meaning of the word "hypocrisy" as applying to a specific speaker. I believe that it was used in a more general way. Therefore, it is parliamentary.

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior who referred to some renovations in the Prime Minister's Office that he conveniently did not make reference to the renovations to Stornoway, the home of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner), renovations which were much more substantial. I must say as well, Sir, that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) took a 15 per cent reduction in his salary increase and Cabinet Ministers took a 10 per cent reduction. That same offer was made to the Leader of the Official Opposition as well as to the Leader of the NDP (Mr. Broadbent) and they both refused. They were not going to take any reduction in salary to show any leadership.

Second, I would like to refer to the little Indian boy to whom the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior referred. The