

I think we all appreciate the graphic description given us by Senator Riley of the very serious effects of the storm which caused so much damage, particularly in the Maritime Provinces. I have no information as yet that any official request for assistance has been received, but I have no doubt that should such a request for assistance arrive, sympathetic attention will be given to it.

### PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF SENATORS

#### MOTION TO APPOINT SPECIAL COMMITTEE—QUESTION

**Senator Rowe:** Honourable senators, I am not sure if this is the appropriate time to ask this question, or whether I should wait until Order No. 4 is called.

Senator Croll was not in the chamber yesterday when a question was raised by the Leader of the Opposition about this order when Senator Petten asked that it stand until March 2. In my view my question is a very important one, and I prefer to raise it now. At what time may we expect further consideration of Order No. 4? This was a motion brought forward by the Honourable Senator Perrault, the Leader of the Government in the Senate. My reason for asking the question is very simple. I regard this as a very important motion.

**Senator Perrault:** I yield to our distinguished colleague, Senator Croll.

**Senator Croll:** As a matter of fact, if the honourable senator is ready to proceed, we can proceed with it today.

### ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM

#### FAMILY ALLOWANCES—SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION ANSWERED

**Senator Perrault:** Honourable senators, I should like to refer to supplementary remarks by one of our distinguished colleagues, Senator Forsey, last night relating to his original question of December 20, 1975. I hope that this may conclude the dialogue, which has been rather interesting.

His question was as to the means by which family allowance payments would be kept at the present level, and I should like to take this opportunity to provide some further information.

I am informed that the Family Allowances Act (1973) provides for a mandatory indexing of family allowance payments "as prescribed." The indexing is prescribed through regulations pursuant to the act, and regulations currently in effect say that the increase in family allowance payments to match the cost of living increase during the preceding year was to be effective January 1, 1976. Therefore, there is now in existence a regulation providing for the cost of living increase to the family allowances.

However, in a practical sense, Mr. Chrétien, the President of Treasury Board, in his remarks of December 18, 1975, to the House of Commons regarding budget cuts indicated that the Family Allowances Act would be amended in the resumed session to reflect a suspension for one year of the indexing of family allowance payments and that such legislation would have a retroactive effect. It is in the interests of recipients of family allowances to have a clear understanding of the amounts of the payment they

would receive over the year. Therefore, rather than make an overpayment during the first months of 1976, before the Family Allowances Act was amended, and then have the government hold back sufficient funds after the legislation was passed to collect the overpayment, it was thought wiser to give recipients the assurance of the 12 equal monthly payments of family allowance.

I hope that the foregoing information has dealt fully with Senator Forsey's question when he asked about the "precise" legislative or other means that would be employed to suspend the indexing of family allowance payments.

**Senator Flynn:** A very interesting answer.

### SCIENCE POLICY

#### COMMITTEE MEETING CANCELLED

**Senator Lamontagne:** Honourable senators, before the Orders of the Day are called, I wish to announce that the meeting of the Special Senate Committee on Science Policy which was to have taken place this afternoon has been cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

### HALIFAX RELIEF COMMISSION PENSION CONTINUATION BILL

#### SECOND READING

The Senate resumed from yesterday the debate on the motion of Senator Norrie for the second reading of Bill C-78, to repeal an act respecting the Halifax Relief Commission and to authorize the continuation of pensions, grants or allowances paid by the Halifax Relief Commission.

**Hon. George I. Smith:** Honourable senators, as I intimated briefly last evening, I wish to make some comments in respect of this bill, but I want to make it very clear from the beginning that I support the bill. Therefore I do not rise for the purpose of asking anyone to oppose it. The suggestions I have to make are for future consideration, or for present consideration and future action, as the case may be.

I thought I might give the house a few more facts about the matter, not in any way to contradict what was said by the honourable senator from Colchester-Cumberland (Senator Norrie) last evening, but rather as an amplification thereof.

As the honourable senator said, those involved in receiving benefits from this fund in December 1975 numbered 65. The ages of these 65 people, in groups, are as follows: seven are in their fifties, 25 in their sixties, 23 in their seventies, and 10 in their eighties. As to categories of people, one is a dependant of a person killed in the explosion; five are widows of persons killed; nine are suffering from general disability due to injuries received in the explosion; 11 are blind; and 39 are partially blind, many having lost completely the sight of one eye.

● (1420)

Perhaps in passing it is worth noting that this high proportion of people who have had their eyesight affected reflects some indication of what happened on December 6,