

speech here a couple of weeks ago, those changes are intended to, and do, provide more assistance to families on low incomes.

If I recall the statistics correctly, there are no losers—there are only winners—for those people with family incomes up to the mid \$50,000 per annum range.

I may say that that policy has been very well received; even some habitual critics of the government are prepared to say, and have said, that it is a step in the right direction to end universality in the family allowance program and provide more assistance to those families who are in greater need, and in particular the working poor.

With regard to the Canada Assistance Plan, we had that discussion at second reading of Bill C-32. The bill is now in committee. If the honourable senator wishes, we can discuss it again at third reading. However, as I pointed out at the time, that bill provides that Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, the three provinces directly affected, will have the federal contribution increased by as much as 5 per cent.

Five per cent is higher than the increase in the cost of living. It is considerably higher than the increase in federal government program expenditures in recent years, and it is, I think, a greater increase than many of those provinces—certainly Ontario—are providing to their municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals by way of increase.

The honourable senator wants to know what we are doing about the adverse economic circumstances which so many people encounter. The short answer to his question is that we have recently brought in a budget and we are pursuing a policy that will create 500,000 new jobs between now and 1993 and 1.5 million new jobs in a somewhat longer time frame.

All the signs are that the economy is rebounding—the signs both here and in the United States—and I trust that the honourable senator will rejoice in those developments.

Senator Frith: If the results are as predicted I will certainly rejoice. I am glad that the Leader of the Government in the Senate took the opportunity to put those words on the record. We will see what are the practical results of those words. I take it we can expect these 500,000 new jobs between now and 1993, if I heard the leader correctly, and we can perhaps make a note in our calendars to see whether between now and 1993 that is the result of the words he has put on the record.

In the longer term, we will have to see. There may be a new government in office by that time. In that case we can be sure that Senator Murray will rise to take credit for the additional jobs that will have taken place or been earned by then.

● (1430)

JUSTICE

CANCELLATION OF COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Royce Frith: My second question deals with the Court Challenges Program. I take it we will be getting legislation that will include the cancellation of the Court Challenges Program along with the cancellation of other initiatives and

institutions. I want to give the Leader of the Government an opportunity to comment, not necessarily today, but today and later if he wishes, on a letter by Madam Bertha Wilson, former Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, written on March 4 to the Minister of Justice. I will put the letter on the record—it is only a few paragraphs—in order to give him an opportunity to comment later, if he prefers.

Dear Minister:

I am writing to express my dismay and distress over the recent cancellation of the Court Challenges Program.

I have on numerous occasions publicly expressed the view that it is totally illusory to confer rights on people who do not have the means to enforce them and I assumed that the expansion of the Court Challenges Program following the advent of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was an effort to address this problem.

I fully appreciate, of course, that all governments are currently in a period of financial restraint but I must say that I have difficulty with a policy that places the burden of that restraint on those who can least afford to bear it.

I saw for myself when I was a member of the Supreme Court how invaluable this Program has been to minority groups and to the disadvantaged. It has clearly been well and efficiently administered and has resulted in an excellent input into many very significant “test” cases. I am sure that my former colleagues on the Court, if asked, would confirm that view. Indeed, I believe that I can say with complete confidence that the public has unquestionably received full value for its money on this particular Program.

If there is any possibility that the Government’s decision on the Court Challenges Program might be reversed, may I respectfully add my voice to what I am sure is a chorus of disapproval of the cancellation of this very imaginative and worthwhile program.

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

Bertha Wilson

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, given that the letter from the distinguished former Madam Justice Wilson was addressed to my colleague Ms. Campbell, I will be glad to ask Ms. Campbell to let me have a copy of her reply so that I can table it here or read it into the record.

THE ECONOMY

EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON CHILD BENEFITS

Hon. Lorna Marsden: Honourable senators, I would like to pursue further the response that the Leader of the Government gave to Senator Frith’s question about child benefits. The Leader of the Government says that the government’s white paper has been well received. Indeed, as he and all senators