

Family Allowances

cheques as members of parliament with their SIN number on them. I would like to know how many members of this House refused to cash their cheques.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Chairman, I should not want to miss this very special opportunity, the study of Bill C-10 which deals very specifically with the income of Canadian families, of saying what I think of this bill. Mr. Chairman, in the speeches made in this House by some of my colleagues, it has happened at times that an outline was given of the background of the act which first authorized the Canadian government to pay family allowances to our Canadian families.

Mr. Chairman, having been directly concerned with, and especially having participated with many others in the matter before that act was introduced in parliament, which authorizes the payment of family allowances, I must point out that we were often accused by opponents of such social legislation of being marxists and of wanting to give families things they had not earned. The young might be interested in this, to better understand the whys and wherefores of that very important social legislation, not only at that time but also in this day and age when amendments are being made to it on the basis of present needs. I should like to tell my colleagues that the legislation passed by parliament many years ago stirred up many a controversy. I remember, with considerable emotion as I remind the House of it, how a movement was organized among people who, at the time, wanted to look seriously into the situation of families with a view to introducing a policy to help the women better fulfil their role as mothers, and give the fathers additional income to enable them to assume their responsibilities.

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We were regarded as general disrupters. Some even said that we were communists because we wanted to introduce in our society a social measure, a family measure, to acknowledge family needs and the sacred character of motherhood. But they forgot to say that when dramatic events occur, when the country is in a difficult situation because of war, it is in families that soldiers are sought to defend our liberties. It is in families that our technicians are sought as well as the professionals and the engineers who will, throughout the years, manufacture the weapons and the goods needed by the country to ensure its defence and security. We forgot that when some people really want to give more security to families the whole country, the entire population benefit by it.

As far as I am concerned—and I would not like to pose as an example, far from that, because many of my colleagues in this House had members of their own families who volunteered to fight abroad in order to ensure the level of security and freedom we are now enjoying—in my own family as in those of many of my hon. colleagues, it was the same thing. But should

[Miss Bégin.]

we go on imposing obligations only to those mothers and fathers, or should we on occasion recognize them certain rights and a degree of economic security?

That is why, in 1945, the Canadian government enacted the statute under which the government could pay family allowances, and at that time such allowances were paid on a universal basis. It was then recognized that mothers, whatever their husband's incomes—because at that time husbands in most cases were the providers—were entitled to some income.

Mr. Chairman, I remember at that time some rather deep minds were saying: If we pass the family allowances legislation, we will be unduly encouraging parents to bring up large families. The suggestion was that mothers and fathers would be increasing the Canadian population because of family allowances. The young people making such suggestions did not know what they were talking about because I for one, as many others, have a large family but never did I do my duty because of any social benefit, even family allowances, nor did other parents. Love is greater than that.

Nonetheless, Mr. Chairman, recognizing the right to allowances for families is a right of association in our society. Let those in our society who have the courage to give children to our country, the human capital that is any country's greatest resource. If this is not the greatest resource, Mr. Chairman, let people rise and tell me what is the greatest resource in the country. I have always considered that the most fabulous wealth is the human resource. Hence, if human resource is the greatest wealth in our country, it is the duty of the state, which is the association of individuals and families, to give special consideration to those persons who have the courage to give this human resource to our native land. This is not achieved without sacrifice; however, it is also the source of great satisfactions. When there is a new-born in the family, all parents are delighted with the birth of this child; however, the parents are still responsible for the child. They must see that the child's needs are satisfied in a normal way. They have to ensure his education until he is self-sufficient. That is the role of parents. I would like this role to be recognized, that it be on a continuing basis the role of all persons who enter into a partnership to lay the foundations of a family.

Mr. Chairman, we deplore today, and with good reasons, the many separations, the numerous divorces, whatever the reason for them, it is not my role to judge them, it is neither my line nor my business. But as legislators, as parliamentarians whose duty it is to administer the public good, to administer the country, we have a responsibility. It is not in our line of duty to go and see in people's bedrooms why they want to have one, five, or ten children. That is not our responsibility. That is not our business. But, Mr. Chairman, when in a household there are one, two, five, ten children, that represents a wealth for our country. And it is our role as parliamentarians to see that the rights of these parents are recognized. It is our responsibility