

*Family Income Security Plan*

that it would rather control all those benefits through a system which it would co-ordinate itself.

As for the bill, it even seemed to us that we were witnessing a federal-provincial race or, if you prefer, a Canada-Quebec race. They are both competing to be first. On the one hand, the Quebec Minister of Social Affairs, who had set May 1, as the target date, was compelled at a certain moment to say that he would postpone for a month or two his comprehensive family allowances plan. On the other hand, the federal government is endeavouring to have the legislation concerning family allowances passed quickly.

If in such an important part of the country as Quebec there is not full agreement with this measure, we realize immediately the need to further consider this subject and to postpone for a little while the passage of this bill. There is a major reason, in my view, for supporting the amendment.

We must also, instead of making a petty reform of this kind, consider a general plan where anything relating to social questions would be coordinated within a system which would provide every Canadian with a guaranteed income.

It is in a comprehensive scheme that all these things should fit. This is why I say, again, that instead of passing a particular legislation, we should further consider a general solution to the whole problem, that is, the establishment of a guaranteed vital minimum income for all. Such should be our objective. Social laws that we have considered should be drafted in view of this major objective.

• (1630)

It is obvious that giving \$15 or \$20 more, in a very niggardly manner, checking books of every family in order to find out, to the month, what is its income, will not solve the problem. It is some form of excessive socialism that such a method would introduce. And as was stated by, I think, my colleague from Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) a few days ago, such selective benefits create discrimination.

I say in effect, Mr. Speaker, that discrimination is created, considering that in knowing the amount of family allowances received by a family, one also knows the approximate amount that family's income. Is that not indirect intervention in matters concerning individual freedom, collective freedom and, especially, the freedom of families?

Some will say: The same thing happens with regard to income tax. The situation is slightly different there, because, as everyone knows, family allowance cheques are seen by all. Everyone knows that the children themselves speak about them, and that is why I say that there is discrimination.

It might even come to this. Two small boys, two little girls, or a little girl and a small boy will say: Me, I am not getting an allowance, while the other will reply: I am. So how are we going to accept such a situation? This is what I call discrimination.

One child will be told: I am not getting an allowance; at home, we are not getting any. The other will reply: I am because my parents are getting allowances. So, will they

[Mr. Matte.]

have to argue and say: I am not getting any because my parents earn more money than yours; yours are no good. We can easily see what this could lead to. This may be a viewpoint which has not been considered but this is really what could happen, all the more so since when children are 12, 13, 14 or 18 years old, parents usually give such allowances to the children themselves, especially when they are old enough to attend secondary school. Then I would really think that there is discrimination.

If they really want to score political points right now, for electoral purposes or otherwise, Mr. Speaker, there would be a very simple solution. Instead of introducing this legislation, all that is necessary would be to increase family allowances as we know them. All we need to do is to increase them. There is nothing complicated there.

That is why I say that those who feel that by supporting this amendment we are against raising family allowances are completely wrong. On the contrary, I would be in favour of a proposal such as this: From now on, family allowances will be \$12 and \$15 instead of \$8 and \$10. I would not object to that. I would even prefer to see them tailored to the real needs of families. Therefore, I am not against their immediate increase within the framework of the legislation that is already in existence, and we should wait before introducing a bill which could really help families with the problems they are facing daily, and particularly those resulting from the continuous rise in the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to remind hon. members of a major fact, that nothing can be changed through hastily developed legislation to increase family allowances for the purpose of making a good impression on people, so that the government can claim to have increased family allowances from one amount to another, whereas there has been in fact all kinds of chicanery to deprive some people of these benefits according to their salary bracket.

I feel that any effort to achieve a worthwhile legislation in this field should concentrate on the basic determining factor and aim at bringing about social security as a whole, which could really solve basic problems of all Canadian families. And I repeat that to achieve this, it must be taken into account that this field comes under provincial jurisdiction and that there should therefore be more consultation with the provinces on the subject. Also, any agreement relative to family allowances should first be examined jointly with those provinces which want to implement their own system.

[English]

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest and very close attention to the speech made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro). In terms of its construction and in terms of the manner in which he delivered it, I must say it was one of the best speeches he has made in the House of Commons. But in terms of any appreciation of social philosophy, in terms of any understanding of the needs of our society, that speech was so far off base I am as surprised he should have made it as he says he is surprised that we are opposing his bill.