

Family Allowances Act, 1973
GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

FAMILY ALLOWANCES ACT, 1973

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of report stage of Bill C-70, an Act to amend the Family Allowances Act, 1973, as reported (without amendment) from a legislative committee, and of motion No. 2 of Ms. Mitchell (p. 9854).

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal-Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this amendment is an opportunity for Conservative Members to correct their mistake and compensate for their incompetence, their poor judgment and their lack of social justice.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, his Cabinet colleagues and all Conservative back-benchers keep saying that our economy is doing very well. They say they are going to solve all our problems and that our economic prospects are very encouraging. If they have so much confidence in their Prime Minister, if they are so sure that we have a promising future, why would they not adopt this amendment so that the provisions of Bill C-70, which is designed to de-index and reduce family allowances, would remain in force for only one year? Conservative Members ought to give it a thought if they are motivated by compassion rather than mere financial considerations. They should adopt this amendment and restore full indexation of family allowances.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Champlain (Mr. Champagne) showed his lack of experience for the second time. The first time was when he made a letter public to rake his colleagues over the coals, but this morning he proved that he was both inexperienced and incompetent. The Members from Quebec will no longer be able to get away with their lack of experience, they will have to deliver the goods.

The Bill now before us is the one designed to slash into family allowances. But there is another one dealing with the child tax credit. Here again, after granting three yearly increases in a row, for the first time in Canada's history the Government is not allowing full indexation of the child tax credit that caters to families most in need. Not only with respect to the whole family support program, this Government decides to reduce the funds available for middle-income families, for families with children, and this will have repercussions, I am sure, for Conservative Members. . . . That may not involve huge amounts, but for poor families, single-parent families, sometimes the extra dollar per month means milk for the children, school supplies, clothing for the children.

Mr. Speaker, the increase allowed by this Government in Canada is 31 cents a month for family allowances, but in Quebec, for those with only one child it is about 19 cents. And you can see those same individuals, those same people support-

ing all in the same breath a Bill allowing the most affluent as much as \$500,000 in capital gain exemption, and forcing this House to use the taxpayers' money to help depositors who had \$60,000 or more stashed in the banks that went bankrupt in Western Canada.

For the first time a Government has changed the whole income support envelope for families with children. Everyone knows that there is the family allowance program, the tax exemption for dependent children and the tax credit in support of middle- and low-income families. It is true that the Liberal Party had already de-indexed or restricted the increase in family allowances under the 6 and 5 program. But if Conservative Members want to check with the Department, they will see that whenever funds were taken from one item they were transferred to another item, to help families most in need, contrary to what this Government is doing. Its first gesture in 1985-86 is essentially an attack against the universal program called the family allowance program and a move to deprive Canadian families of \$15 million while concerning the tax exemption, a measure favouring the most affluent, the Government is only waiting until 1986-87. This little example, this illustration alone shows well the philosophy of the people in the Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Health and Welfare . . . I repeat once again, this is the first time in Canada that a Minister, who normally should sit in Cabinet to defend the interests of the men and women who are the least organized in our society, those who have the least occasion to defend themselves, the senior citizens, the sick, the families with children, that this Minister has completely deserted those three groups in our society in order to support the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) who is helping the most affluent.

The Clark Cabinet never would have accepted that. The Conservatives led by Mr. Diefenbaker never would have accepted that. And still less, Ministers like Miss Bégin, who at all times had the courage to stand up and fight in Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, NDP Members refer to the 6 and 5 per cent, and I see my friend for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) smiling. But they will remember what I said in my opening remarks, that when the 6 and 5 program was established, funds were transferred to the tax credit. When Old Age Security pensions were limited to 6 and 5 per cent, there was double indexation for the most in need amongst senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the 10 per cent tax on drugs was another downright scandal that took place in the House of Commons.

Nevertheless, I think that the Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) may have a chance to make up for his mistakes, as do all Conservative Members, since they have their caucus this coming week-end. During the week-end they will for once get a chance to voice the requests and stand up for the concerns expressed by the people of their constituencies who signed the petitions.