

*Family Income Security Plan*

taken part in the debate have contributed further arguments criticizing the bill and strengthening the points I made in opposition to the measure.

There were three main areas of objection to which I directed attention in the course of my previous speech. The first was that Bill C-170 replaces the principle of universality with the principle of selectivity; second, the bill stigmatizes people in receipt of low incomes; third, that the measure is so confused that it will lead to misunderstanding and resentment. Moreover, the abandonment of the principle of universality will lead to divisiveness, as has been the case in the past when the government has applied the principle of selectivity to other acts.

I hardly need to remind the House of the divisiveness which has been created in connection with the old age security legislation and the income supplement related to that scheme. All hon. members have received letters reflecting the ill-feeling which has been created among senior citizens who receive the basic old age security allowance of \$80 and do not benefit from a cost of living bonus. They contrast their position with that of people who receive old age security payments together with the income supplement and the 2 per cent cost of living bonus. I do not think it is worthy of the government to ignore these feelings which have been engendered among recipients of old age security benefits.

The government is repeating this mistake in connection with family allowances. The principle of selectivity was applied recently in connection with unemployment insurance benefits and has created not only chaos but ill-feeling among workers. I was surprised yesterday when the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford) said the government intended to make money available at low rates of interest to people in low income brackets so they might purchase homes. I am surprised he should have chosen this course rather than announcing comprehensive housing plans which would lead to a proper mix of people at different income levels. The government is once again stigmatizing and segregating a certain group of people. I have given three examples of the improper use of the principle of selectivity as opposed to the principle of universality.

The House has before it an amendment to the motion, in the name of the leader of my party. In substance, it says we should give consideration to the introduction of legislation amending the Family Allowances Act and Youth Allowances Act to provide for substantial increases in the allowances paid thereunder, to continue the principle of universality and make related changes in the income tax legislation. I hope the minister will support the amendment.

It is heartening to note that members of the Conservative party have been speaking in support of the amendment. It is also heartening to note that members of the Cr ditiste party have in their speeches indicated support of the amendment. I would think the substance of their argument can be deduced from the amendment itself; many of us wish to continue the principle of universality.

I would remind the minister that when he brought forth his white paper on family income security, many of us believed he would refer it to the appropriate committee for study in depth before legislation was brought down.

[Mr. Gilbert.]

He did not do so. He introduced legislation concerning old age pensions and this resulted in the criticism to which I have referred. One of the ways in which the hon. gentleman could avoid criticism of this bill would be by supporting the amendment, continuing the principle of universality and at the same time making an appropriate increase in the allowances under this program. Alternatively, he could withdraw the bill and refer this legislation, together with the white paper, to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs where it could be studied in depth.

I recall that in his opening statement the minister attempted to persuade members of the House that the Canadian Council on Social Development and the Canadian Labour Congress were in agreement with the terms of the measure before us. The speech of my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) drew attention to the criticisms and reservations expressed by those bodies.

• (1520)

I am making a special appeal to the Minister of National Health and Welfare who I think basically is attempting to bring forth legislation to help the children of Canada. I ask him to support not only the amendment but to give full consideration to transferring the subject matter of this bill to an appropriate committee. I think he would be the last to want to stigmatize or categorize people in regard to their income. It is high time that we in Canada stopped doing this and I think the minister, who most of the time wants to do his best for Canadians and is concerned for them, would not want this principle to continue.

The third point that I set forth regarding the complexities of the legislation I am sure has had an effect upon the minister. It certainly has had an effect upon hon. members who have read the bill and have tried to determine what its provisions mean and how they will be applied. Some have said that it would require the genius of a Philadelphia lawyer to determine what will be income and how much income a person must have before qualifying for family allowances.

We should always make bills as simple and as understandable as possible. The minister has failed to do this. He has taken directions from a cabinet committee as to what should be done and has tried to squeeze into the bill a principle that should not be applied in Canada. I ask the minister not to be persuaded or counselled by his officials regarding this bill but to read it and see whether he can understand it. He is a lawyer by profession and knows how to read statutes and the clauses of bills. I would give him the Pulitzer prize or the Nobel prize if he could tell the members of the House in clear, concise and convincing terms what is meant by some of the provisions of the bill.

As I have said, I have had the opportunity of setting forth in detail my main criticisms. At this time I rise only to repeat them and to plead with the minister. He has brought forth a very bad bill both in principle and in administrative complexity. I would ask him as a Canadian, not as a Liberal but as a Canadian who is concerned for the social security of all Canadians, to reconsider the bill and to bring forth a measure that is clear, concise and