

Family Allowances Act, 1973

was to protect Canadian jobs. That is on the public record. That is a rather indefensible position, but it is irrefutable and there is no argument that that response is now a matter of public record, from our committee meeting this morning.

Mr. Speaker, this decision to buy service stations instead of providing money to families should perhaps be put in context. One recent service station purchase, the smallest one in its total dollar cost that has been made by this Government since 1974, is at a cost of something in the order of \$550 million. Mr. Speaker, just buying 6 per cent fewer service stations from that one deal would enable us to leave the Family Allowances program alone. Transferring 6 per cent of the cost to the Family Allowance program would mean we do not have to deal with this piece of legislation this afternoon. Ninety-four per cent of the service stations that seem to be their passion and their priority could have been bought, and by not buying the remaining 6 per cent of them, the Family Allowance program could have been left alone.

Mr. Speaker, that identifies in the clearest, most concrete form the choices that the Cabinet—

Some Hon. Members: Order, order!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Fisher: A few minutes ago the Member said that he was referring to the truth. I wonder if he could tell us how the discussion he is carrying on about service stations bears any relation to the truth, let alone relevance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Why don't you sit down and listen to his speech?

Mr. Hawkes: One of the responsibilities of a Cabinet is to make spending and taxing decisions. One of the responsibilities of all Members of this House is to hold the Cabinet responsible for those spending and taxing decisions. The Cabinet is asking us later this day to cut the amount of assistance that this Parliament is prepared to give to families. It is going to ask us to cut the amount of assistance that we give to pensioners.

• (1230)

The Cabinet Minister defends that by saying we do not have any money. Governments spend and governments choose the priority, when the backbenchers support them in the choice of the priority. This Government clearly and consistently chooses to buy service stations instead of providing money to senior citizens and families in Canada.

If Members on the other side joined with this Party, we could stop this Bill. If they would stand up in this House and vote in the manner that says to the Cabinet "Your priorities are messed up, your priorities are wrong", we could collectively stop it. We are wasting taxpayers' dollars. We are driving the country deeper into debt because of one or two stubborn

people in the front benches whose minds are just a little mixed up about what Canada needs and should have today.

The only check on that power is the votes of backbenchers in the Liberal Party. They have a majority. On one or two occasions later this day we will see whether they are willing to stand up in this House and say yes, cut assistance to families. Next week we will see if they are willing to stand in this House and cut assistance to pensioners. We have already seen that they are willing to stand in this House and buy service stations as a priority. Now they are trying to make us believe there is no money.

Anybody on the other side who tells their constituents there is not enough money for pensions and family assistance is in danger of stretching the truth. The money is there, but it has been allocated to buying service stations, air travel for Ministers, and giving patronage to people such as Keith Davey, Jim Coutts, Maurice Stong, Joel Bell, and to send people to Europe at \$200,000 a year for language training when we have some of the best teachers in the world in this country. Those are the priorities of this Cabinet, supported by the backbenchers. Some day they will be accountable to the voters in their riding.

Canadian jobs are disappearing at a rapid rate because the backbenchers support that policy. It is not a myth that the Liberal Party is self-destructing. The Gallup Poll now shows that 30 per cent of Canadians believe in them, whereas two years ago it was 50 per cent. Support is eroding and people say it is the Liberal Party's own fault.

We are helping. We are vigilant. We are hard-working and know what we are talking about. I bring to the attention of Hon. Members that our Leader and our caucus stood alone two years ago on the Constitution when all the Members opposite—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I apologize for having to interrupt the Hon. Member for Calgary West. However, as Hon. Members know, the rule of relevancy is a very difficult one for the Chair to apply. I invite the Hon. Member for Calgary West to relate his comments to the debate now before the House, a Bill to amend the Family Allowances Act.

Mr. Hawkes: I will be very happy to do that.

Mr. Harquail: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Perhaps this is a good occasion because we have some difficulty with the procedure. Earlier the Hon. Member said that he had chosen one of the official languages to point out to Canadians that some Members on this side said something that was not the truth. Would he like to withdraw that or clarify what he meant?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. That is clearly debate.

[Translation]

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I trust your interpretation of the Standing Orders of the House.