

Family Allowances Act

who have benefited from the system as it has been administered so far, namely, in a universal manner.

We all gain by a system, Mr. Speaker, that distributes wealth through universal programs and taxes those who can pay, rather than by the selective application which, by 1990, and this is the bottom line of the Bill before us, will mean that the average Canadian family will in real purchasing power lose over \$1,000. That is the sadness of the measure. All of a sudden Canadians are being told that as of next year their family allowances will no longer keep pace, with the cost of living that is, up to 3 per cent. Everybody's capacity to receive and use this income will be affected by 3 per cent beginning next year. There will be an erosion in purchasing power of family allowance recipients.

To us who are the architects of the social security system of Canada, this is a profoundly hurting experience.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Caccia: I hear some Members of the New Democratic Party howling. They have never been in power. They have never put into practice any scheme. We, successive Liberal Governments, have put and built into place a fine social security system. It is very hurtful to see a dismantling operation as a result of the Progressive Conservative Party getting into power and gradually shifting the income to the advantage of those in the higher income brackets and to the disadvantage of those in the lower income brackets because that will be the net effect of this measure in the long run. Let me repeat, that will be the net effect in the long run. You have to see it in its totality and as it will affect people by 1990. At that time, we hope we will have an opportunity to settle the accounts on the hustings. We will certainly have something to say about the Tory candidates in each of our ridings concerning this measure. The present Minister of National Health and Welfare will also have his own riding defending this measure. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that that will be the case.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, I take no great pleasure in talking about this particular Bill. It is extremely regressive and will have a serious effect on Canadian women and their families. Why would the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), who I know to be a fairly reasonable type person, suddenly rush in to declare closure on debate on this Bill? What is the Government afraid of? The Government must know, as I do, that there are a growing number of Canadians across the land who view this Budget with some dismay. They have examined the Budget—and for very good reason—in a way that Canadians have never examined previous Budgets. Senior citizens across the country indicated their displeasure during the month of June when, despite the arguments of the Government that the seniors supported what it was doing, they clearly showed that they did not support it. In fact, they organized in a political way rarely seen before among the senior population. They organized so effectively that they will never view Governments as they did in the past when they trusted Governments to treat them properly and listened to the promises of politicians. They

suddenly found that all the promises made to them were betrayed and that they were being asked to be sacrificial lambs in the Government's fight to reduce the deficit. Seniors saw what the Government was doing to them in the Budget, and I think women are seeing the same thing.

● (1730)

Like most Hon. Members last summer, I spent time talking with people in my own constituency and in other communities to hear what they had to say about the Budget of the Government. It is widely recognized that the Budget, more than any other Budget, certainly in my experience and in the experience of many other people, constitutes probably the largest shift in disposable income away from people at the low and middle income levels to people in high income brackets. There is absolutely no doubt in anyone's mind that the Budget dealt a severe blow to those people who could least afford to pay to reduce, as the Government put it, the national deficit. That Budget is being fully understood and women are beginning to organize against this attack on family allowances and, I would even say, an attack on the family as we in Canada know it.

There is absolutely no question that the deindexing proposal, in addition to the other ones in the Income Tax Act—and we will have plenty of time to talk about them specifically as they affect family allowances—is an outright attack on women. Many women rely on that cheque as their only source of independent income. Contrary to the promises of the Government during the election campaign that it would do many things for women, it brought in these proposals. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) appeared on national television several times promising to provide more dollars for rape crisis centres. What did he do in the Budget? He did nothing, absolutely nothing. What about the promise with regard to transition houses for battered women? There has been nothing. What about equal pay for work of equal value? There has been nothing. What about more money for child care services? The Prime Minister referred it to a parliamentary committee. I am sure the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) will ensure that women's rights and the rights of children are advanced on that committee.

What about research and development? The Prime Minister promised oodles of money to step up the efforts of the country in the area of research and development. What did we see in the Budget? We saw nothing but departmental cuts for research and development. What about the Canada Council? All we see is less money for the arts. What about social programs? The Prime Minister declared that social programs, particularly universal ones, were a sacred trust and that if there was to be any change in social programs, the money saved would certainly not go toward reducing the deficit. What have we seen since then? We have seen that the Government was clear in its intention when it decided to deindex old age security benefits and that any money it saved, as if it was its money and not that of taxpayers, would go toward reducing the deficit. The same thing is happening in the area of family allowances and in other areas of the income tax system. If the Government were seriously interested in