

*Family Allowances*

the \$200 per child, being in a taxable bracket although she is a low income earner?

The other question I would like to ask has to do with consultation with the provinces. The minister has indicated that there has been consultation with the provinces, and yet at the conference in September in Antigonish, where the various provincial welfare ministers met, a communiqué was issued complaining that they had not been sufficiently consulted on changes in family allowances. Not only did they mention family allowances but they also mentioned unemployment insurance. However, we will take that up when we have Bill C-14 before us. They requested at the time that the Minister of National Health and Welfare meet with them at the earliest possible opportunity. I should like to ask her if she has done so and, very specifically, whether she has consulted Alberta, Newfoundland and Ontario in view of the fact that all three ministers from these provinces have indicated clearly that there was no prior consultation.

I should also like to ask the minister whether she has had any clear indication from the provinces whether provincial welfare will be reduced owing to the fact that there will be additional income coming to families benefiting from provincial social assistance. I do not want a general response to that question. I want a specific response as to what the various provinces have indicated. Also, perhaps I could prevail on the minister to tell us whether she has correspondence or memoranda in that regard indicating a firm agreement or understanding between the provinces and her department. It would be beneficial to the House if we could have that information.

Ancillary to that question is the question of day care fees and whether there will be adjustments made to day care fees in view of the increased income which will be coming from this measure.

I have some other questions, Mr. Chairman, but in view of the advancing time I should like to give the minister some time to respond to my questions.

**Miss Bégin:** Mr. Chairman, I will try to answer the three questions put to me, but before doing so I should like to assure the hon. member for York South that I listened to her remarks very carefully. I also want to say to the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock who spoke with some indignation last night of the intervention of the government in the sanctity of the family unit, as he put it, that my answer to him is that that sanctity was surely lost the day public schools were created in our country. That should clarify that particular point once and for all.

The hon. member for Provencher asked several questions regarding consultation with women's groups or advisory councils. I suggest he could write to the president of the federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Mrs. Yvette Rousseau, to ask her for the three resolutions passed by the council with regard to this reform. I do not know whether or not I have received letters on this subject. The work I did was not for the royal commission of inquiry. I spoke and met with mothers and with women's groups because it is women's

groups that have defended the interests of women in their role as mothers. I intend to continue these discussions, even if it is not within the scope of my portfolio, each time I attend public meetings in this country on the subject of this reform. My next meeting with women is to take place next week in Quebec city where several women's groups will gather to discuss this bill with me. Let me reiterate that all the women's groups I have met have backed the reform. Some have indicated disagreement—which I understand very well, of course—with the reduction in universal family allowances.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** You agreed with them on that.

**Miss Bégin:** I myself regret very much the fact that, due to the economic situation of the country, these reductions in family allowances have had to be made.

With regard to consultation with the provinces, I have never said that there have been consultations with the provinces on the reform before it had been announced officially in August. However, when a guaranteed annual income as an objective of the Canadian government's social policies was rejected in June of 1976, the provinces instructed my predecessor to explore all possible tax related programs and mechanisms to ensure on a selective basis that whatever social programs are necessary are put into effect.

I have often publicly questioned tax exemptions and explained the advantages of tax credits, but obviously the official opposition is not aware of my public statements on the subject in the last six months. I have also identified the three most vulnerable groups in Canada, of which families with children are one.

There was no formal consultation in August but the general avenues we were exploring were well known. I have kept my provincial colleagues informed and I wrote to them formally in August—I do not know the exact date right now—asking them to pass on the full and complete benefits for children through every one of their assistance programs. As I said more than once yesterday, I have not yet received one formal commitment. I have met some of my provincial colleagues informally whenever circumstances allowed me to do so. They understand my viewpoint very well and I am confident that they will pass it on. I am meeting all my provincial colleagues later this month, I believe on November 20 and 21.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Chairman, may I just complete the answers to the points raised by the hon. member for Provencher before we move on to private members' hour.

With regard to application for a social insurance number, I have had the opportunity to have brief discussions with the Minister of Employment and Immigration under whose auspices social insurance cards are processed and he indicated clearly that the turnaround time in the employment and immigration offices in Ottawa is about five days. Sometimes there is the problem of getting data in and out by mail, but we hope there will be no such problem in the future. Assuming all