

Family Allowances Act

ment which he supported had not been taken, the payment today would have been \$51. That is a permanent change. If he takes a look at the six and five proposal also introduced by his Government, there was a change as well. The Hon. Member used the word "permanent". The first time I rose to speak on the Bill, I said very clearly that as financial circumstances permitted, we would examine the benefits level. That is not permanent. I know him to be an honourable man; he has demonstrated that throughout the years. I clearly point out to him that some of the things he said cannot be substantiated in fact.

I also rise today because I am concerned about the statements which were left on the record by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps). At the time of the introduction of Bill C-70, I made proposals relating to more flexibility. I said that there would be more discretionary power for the Minister of National Health and Welfare regarding unfortunate circumstances where children were presumed to be dead, and that we were looking for a means by which to be more caring and more flexible in our dealings with parents in that unfortunate and tragic situation. Unfortunately the Hon. Member absolutely misinterpreted the intent of the proposal. She literally called it an attack on parents in those unfortunate circumstances. In order that the record be very clear in this regard, I point out the effect of that amendment once again. During debate in the House on the family allowance amending Bill, Bill C-70, the Hon. Member for Hamilton East questioned the rationale behind one of the minor amendments included in it. The amendment in question proposes to give the Minister discretionary authority, for the purposes of the family allowance program, to issue a certificate declaring that a child is presumed to be dead in cases where a child has disappeared and there is reasonable evidence to believe that the child is dead. What it will do is enable the Government to settle with the parents in those cases, not to remove any money because at the present time the payment is not for seven years.

● (1620)

In fact, the Act says very clearly it is to be curtailed. That is how the Act now reads. The payment is to be curtailed in that month. Generally we have been paying on a six months basis. That is beyond the date. In fact, what it will now enable us to do is to have the flexibility to meet the exact circumstances of those unfortunate situations.

The third point I make, Mr. Speaker, is this: I wish to inform the House that there have been consultations among the representatives of the Parties of the House and that it is not possible to reach an agreement pursuant to Standing Order 82 or Standing Order 83 with regard to the allocation of time to the second reading stage of Bill C-70, an Act to amend the Family Allowances Act, 1973.

Therefore, at the next sitting of the House it is my intention to propose the following motion pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 84:

That, in relation to Bill C-70, an Act to amend the Family Allowances Act, 1973, one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said Bill; and that fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time

provided for the consideration of government business on the above-mentioned sitting day, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted if necessary, for the purpose of this Order and, in turn, every question necessary to dispose of the said stage of the said Bill shall be put forthwith and successfully, without further debate or amendment.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor-Walkerville): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moments ago the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) asked the members on the government side to think about what they are doing. When in the Chamber speaking as we have been about this Bill and when one looks around the Chamber, one would have to be one of those who likes to sing in the shower where the echo enhances your voice because, really, all the value that attends these interventions is to have the sound of your voice enhanced because it is clear. Look around us. Except for the rat pack making noises behind the benches nobody is paying any attention to what is going on. There is very little likelihood that the arguments that have been repeated over and over again about the unfairness of the Government's action are going to penetrate, except by a process of osmosis.

Yesterday the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway), in dismissing the rather considerable number of statistics advanced to demonstrate that a great many families were going to be hurt by the actions set out in this Bill, advanced the hypothesis that in spite of the fact that the statistics based on what the Bill purports to do now may indicate some harm done to low-income, middle-income and poor people, that if you think about it there may be some changes in the economy, there may be more people going back to work, the Government may change its mind about something or other and when it all gets shaken out in the wash, it will not be so bad after all and, if it is looked at maybe in 1990 or 1991, in fact things will be a great deal better for the poor and the low-income and middle-income people who are going to be hurt by this legislation.

I had great difficulty in following the argument until I observed that the speaker was projecting a map of his logic. I noticed that that map constituted a circular movement of the finger, as I do now, so we could recognize that the logic of his argument was the same as the logic of the entire argument on that side, circular and impenetrable.

It is an argument that must be extremely perplexing and confusing to the Canadian people, particularly in the context of the events that have been transpiring in this House over the last few days. We have a Government that assured the voters that it would do nothing that would hurt the quality of life or affect the benefits of the poor or the middle class in our society and certainly would not commit itself to attacking the deficit on the backs of those who could least afford it. In spite of that we have heard speaker after speaker on the other side, with rotating finger, clearly indicating that one of the motivations for the kind of legislation that we have before us was indeed to cut back the deficit. This is at the same time as we are in the process of discussing the contribution of something in the order of \$1 billion to make up the losses that resulted from this government's ineptitude.

What is transpiring now is really quite shocking when you think about it. After all, it has only been a few weeks since the