

Family Allowances Act, 1973

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that \$1 out of every \$4 tax dollars spent in this country is spent purely on paying the interest on our foreign debt. That, again, underscores the wild expenditures of the Government for the monuments it has been building in tribute of itself. Another example is the purchase of PetroCan, Petrofina and BP Oil. The Government may not have enough money for poor children in this country, but it can buy oil companies and tax the people at the gas station. When farmers are buying their gasoline and their fertilizer, they are paying more money. But this Government cannot find the dollars necessary to help the children in need across this country. They cap the increases in family income at levels below that of the rate of inflation, and that, Sir, is a shameful act. It is unacceptable that the Government would make that a priority when there are so many other areas where it could save the moneys needed to hold down the rate of inflation and to make its programs work.

There are 1,500,000 persons in this country today who are unemployed. More than three million live below the poverty line, and that is by international standards. Out of 24 million Canadians we have some three million persons today in this country who live below the poverty line. The Hon. Members to my left tell me it is four million. I did not see that statistic, but whether it is three million or four million or some other number, it is too much. My data says it is three million. That is too much. If four million is fact, it is just that much more "too much, too much". I did not get my "tang tangled". I meant that, because it is a very cruel, crass attitude of the Government that in order to build its monuments to itself it would choose to cap Family Allowances, including those of people below the poverty line. That is just unacceptable.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare should know that if you are going to cap, you should cap in such situations the incomes of those of higher wealth, not universally. If that is what the Hon. Member for Lincoln meant when he said the Liberal Party supports universality, then it is the Liberal Party which is at fault, if believing in universality leads to that kind of crass treatment of the people. On the basis of the Government's own data, over the next year families earning \$35,000 per year and more will receive \$800 per child, and those at the poverty level will receive \$700 per child. That is not necessarily from Family Allowances; it is the total benefits which they are going to be able to get from tax credits and from other benefits. If this Bill passes it is going to cause a loss of at least \$30 per child, and that is a burden which should not be placed upon those children whose families are living below the poverty line.

This Government has put in place, or allows to stay in place, somewhere in excess of 480 Crown corporations. It has the CBC which it subsidizes at almost \$1 billion a year. Some \$800 million in subsidies goes to that organization. Yet despite that, despite forced metric, rightly or wrongly forced with all of its bureaucracy, there is money there for those children, for needs which are basic to human life, and it should not be acceptable that a Government in its crassness would refuse to

give the kind of adequate support which has been traditionally there.

Single-parent families, most of them headed by females, make up 8 per cent of all of the families in Canada today. But the unfortunate fact is, Mr. Speaker, that those single-parent families headed by females make up 48 per cent of those families which are listed within the poverty bracket. That is what this legislation is aimed at, hurting those people who are least able to cope with their circumstances, female heads of families, caring for their children, who cannot go out to work. That is the insensitive position which the Government is taking toward those particular people. At the same time it tells Donald Macdonald he can have \$800, or \$900 if he is away from his home. That simply is not going to wash with the Canadian people.

The savings for the federal Government for this particular policy, the capping of six and five on Family Allowances, adds up to .05 per cent of the federal budget, or one-hundredth of 1 per cent of our Gross National Product. Surely, in light of Mirabel, Petro-Canada, Petrofina, British Petroleum, the 480 Crown corporations, CBC, and all the other spillage of money which goes on, there is some money in the public Treasury that in this time of inflation and hard economic times, and in this time when there are 1,500,000 persons unemployed, to would retain the traditional standards for families who are under the poverty line. I believe it is an abominable failure of the Government that under such conditions it would choose to pay persons like Donald Macdonald \$800 per day, put wealthy people in the Senate at two salaries, continue with metrication, and continue to support the oil companies. The Liberal landscape, Sir, is a billion dollars of subsidies for PetroCan and a \$80 million cut for poor families and children.

• (1650)

That is the landscape we are looking at, and it is unacceptable. If the Government thinks that it will make a saving by capping universal Family Allowances, it should bear in mind that that expense may very well recur somewhere else. If children do not have the proper nutrition, it could well be that they will fail in school, their health will be affected, and it could affect our rate of crime and unemployment. If we do not take care of the children of the nation, we have to recognize that we are not necessarily making a saving; the cost may reappear somewhere else. We are bound to see that children have an adequate start in life, especially in those families last able to cope, such as that 48 per cent who are poor, families headed by single parent mothers.

Mrs. Erola: Mr. Speaker, it occurs to me that the Member has been making some very serious charges, using figures which are not really very accurate. In the year 1982 the Child Tax Credit was \$261. Is he aware of what the Child Tax Credit will be this year? It will be \$343.

Miss Bégin: He did not know.

Mrs. Erola: Who are the recipients of that Child Tax Credit? Those very people he was referring to, single parent