

Welfare will have the effect of redistributing the present allowances received by families in higher income brackets to those in lower income brackets. This, Mr. Speaker, is a direct attack on poverty. Surely this proposal is putting the dollar where it is needed most. Were the motion of the hon. member to be adopted, and were allowances for all children in Canada less than 16 years of age to be increased by \$1 a day, the cost to the federal treasury would be a total of \$2.7 billion a year.

An hon. Member: How much?

Mr. Foster: A total of \$2.7 billion a year. This is four times the current expenditure of the family allowance program, which costs approximately \$560 million. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the proposed family income security plan contained in the white paper on income security proposes the strengthening of the concept of providing guaranteed income support, not universally but on a selective basis related to family income and family needs. The guiding principle in the proposal is to ensure the greatest possible concentration of resources upon the people in greatest need. It reflects a new sense of purpose and social relevance and is a specific response to the particular problems of those in the low-income bracket.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): Mr. Speaker, I shall speak only for a few minutes because I am convinced the hon. members will want this motion to be put to the vote.

The motion is interesting in that it ties in with the discussions we have had since the white paper on social security was tabled.

I do not agree whole-heartedly with the remarks of the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Isabelle) who says simply that there will always be poor people and rich people.

That argument is not valid, when an attempt is being made to solve the problems of the needy. I blame the government on that score.

Something must be done for the poor.

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Speaker, that attitude is realistic, though.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. Comeau: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry says that we must be realistic and I agree with him. But, when older people are paid \$80 per month, when war veterans get a mere pittance and mothers receive \$6 per month per child, I do not believe this is being realistic.

This morning I received a petition signed by about a hundred mothers, asking for an increase in family allowances.

It is quite true that the white paper published this week by the government suggests increasing to \$16 per month family allowances for families having an income of less than \$4,500.

An hon. Member: Very good stuff, Louis!

Family Allowance Act

Mr. Comeau: Very good stuff, I agree.

I congratulate the government: at last it has seen the need. If it also agreed to increase the old age pensions and veteran's pensions in the same proportion, I would be very happy.

It is my understanding that this change will take effect in September 1971, and I for one shall certainly support it. However, I fail to see why this measure should disregard a person whose annual income is only \$10,000.

Mr. Corbin: Poor people!

Mr. Comeau: It is true that in the opinion of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry, some make thousands of dollars and can pretty well get along without that. It is perhaps not logical that I, with only two children, should receive that \$12 a month.

There are still families with 7, 8, 9, 10, and even 12 children who absolutely need allowances. Indeed a family, especially in the city, with a salary of only \$10,000, is certainly not rich.

I commend the member for his arguments. I do not quite agree with him. Perhaps he is exaggerating when he says we should provide allowances of \$1 a day. I wish to commend him as there is no doubt that we must increase them. I think they will be increased again soon.

I do not agree with the member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) whose arguments were based on the cost of the allowances.

Mr. Speaker, money is always available for what one wants to do. After a degree of priority is agreed upon, the required money is easily found.

Talking about cost is not necessarily a good argument since everything is costly nowadays.

Although I did say that I do not accept all of what the hon. member for Compton advocates, I believe the situation can still be improved.

The cost argument is not valid: if there is a will to find money, there is a way. Indeed, if the government should present a policy liable to bring about the harmonious development of our country, everybody would make more money and would pay more taxes. Government revenue would grow and, consequently, pensions could be raised.

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit me a question?

Mr. Comeau: Provided it is brief.

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member whether he considers that the increase in family allowances has priority over the development of the Bay of Fundy tide-driven plant.

Mr. Comeau: Both these projects, Mr. Speaker, should be given top priority.

[English]

Mr. Ray Perrault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Louder, please.