

Family Allowances

tion of income in Canada, this particular increase will have no great impact. It will obviously give more to the people who need it. It will probably be more helpful to families with low incomes than families with high incomes. In terms of redistribution it is pretty neutral. The new proposal of \$20 a month will obviously be more redistributed than under the present system, but it will not be as redistributive as the FISP proposal.

I would not like to be the one to deprecate the bill I have brought before this House. I know there are very good administrative reasons, and some political reasons, why we should proceed in the way outlined in the bill introduced last July. At the same time, we cannot have our cake and eat it too, claiming that because it is universal and taxable it is the greatest redistributive move that can be made. FISP was even more redistributive, but it had other drawbacks. The whole question of universality and selectivity deserves further consideration at a later stage. I will be pleased to discuss this with hon. members.

[Translation]

Mr. Béchard: Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the minister.

Like all hon. members, the minister knows that, unfortunately, every time the federal government increases some allowance or other, the provincial governments—at least some of them—hurry to reduce immediately by as much the social allowances paid to certain families.

For instance, the unemployed or the sick receive social assistance in the province of Quebec. Can the minister tell us whether or not he has the assurance from all his provincial counterparts that the increase we intend to grant Canadian families will not be denied them elsewhere?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, obviously I can give no assurance of this for the time being. However, I intend writing to all my colleagues, emphasizing the decision of parliament if this bill is passed and asking them to see that these amounts are effectively handed out to the Canadian population, and in particular to those who receive social welfare payments. Then, with the support of all hon. members, I think that I will insist that the provinces do not take this increase as an excuse for reducing certain allowances made to social welfare recipients.

[English]

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, I wish to direct one or two questions to the minister. When I asked the minister yesterday when the government intended to introduce some substantive legislation into the House, he replied that I should go to hell. Was he speaking personally, or on behalf of the government?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, I resent very much that type of statement by the hon. member.

Mr. Béchard: That is typical of him.

Mr. Lalonde: The hon. member knows very well that the exchange that took place behind the curtains was done in a joking way. When the exchange was made there was no animosity between him and myself. Every once in a while this type of exchange happens with my friends on this side

[Mr. Lalonde.]

of the House when we talk together. There was certainly no intention on my part to in any way offend the hon. member. The attempt of the hon. member to put this on the record speaks for his ethics.

Mr. Stevens: Can the minister indicate how the government arrived at the \$12 figure? What was the rationale behind that?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, having listened to the hon. member's competent analysis yesterday. I can only say that it compares with his ability as a banker of previous days. Therefore, I do not think he will have any difficulty determining how we arrived at the \$12 figure.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, I will restate my question. I indicated that I cannot find the rationale, using deflators and that type of thing, to determine how they arrived at the \$12 figure. I ask the minister to give us the benefit of his reasoning as to why they thought \$12 was a suitable figure.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, I refer the hon. member to the bill tabled in this House in July. It provides for a national minimum of \$12, below which no province will be allowed to go in the establishment of provincial variations. It is in reference to this national minimum that this amount was determined.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, I have another point. What assurance can the minister give us that in fact increased cheques will be going out for October, November and December?

Mr. Lalonde: If the hon. member had been in the chamber when I replied to the question asked by the hon. member for Hamilton West, he would have heard the answer to this question.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Allard: Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased with this opportunity to speak on Bill C-223.

Of course, we of the Social Credit are aware that giving \$4 or \$12 at the beginning of October is a step in the right direction, but we contend that it is not enough, that much more could be done.

It is strange that whenever it comes to alleviating the misfortune of the haves-not and of the heads of large families, the government seems to have much trouble finding the necessary money so those people will be reasonably well off.

If I may, Mr. Chairman, I could perhaps tell the hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) where he could find the necessary dollars to provide for more substantial allowances.

For instance, in 1944, when the gross national product was \$12 billion, we were paying \$20 a month to older people and \$6 a month per child; and in 1973, the gross national product being \$114 billion, we are willing to pay older people \$179.65 a month, of which I am delighted, although I would have liked that amount to reach \$200, while monthly family allowances are still at \$6.