

Housewives' Allowance

pay for equal work. But then, we should hasten to say in Canada, because we can afford it and the Lord gave us enough resources to do so, "To each according to his needs." We should find a way to add to income to meet that need. One way to reach that goal of family income would be to pay the mother as such a special allowance. That same allowance could also be paid to the widowed mother and the mother faced with some other hardship. We know, in this day and age, that there is no need to list such other hardships, because they are too numerous to be listed. They are covered by the words "other hardships".

Hon. members opposite may say the government is already paying mothers family allowances. Concerning this, I would point out that in the case of families with incomes below \$13,000, family allowances should not be taxable, as we have said a number of times, and I am convinced government members themselves feel as I do. Of course some may say that the government needs revenues to meet the cost of social programs.

I think that capital should be taxed more. Let us consider the balance sheets of chartered banks which are making more and more profits as well as multinationals which manage to build up colossal reserves on which they are not taxed. We should consider this and we should surely find the revenues needed to compensate tax exemption at least on family allowances. I suggest to the government that families pay fewer taxes so that they have a chance to make a decent living and that our mothers have a little more opportunity to enjoy life and take some rest. They get tired and wear themselves out with work. We must give them a chance to stay beautiful. Women are beautiful. Mothers are beautiful. As legislators we must make all possible efforts to keep them even more beautiful. And to do this, we must alleviate some of their difficulties.

I invite the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) to present a legislation recognizing that Canadian mothers deserve our gratitude and that this Parliament is dedicated to save the family structure which is crucial for our society. I think that if that legislation is passed, it could be considered as the first step towards an annual guaranteed income system.

Last night, during the CBC news report, I watched the summary of resolutions presented to the Liberal party convention during the weekend. I noticed that some were for it and some against. The former finance minister was not absolutely convinced that the annual guaranteed income was a possibility in Canada. The present Minister of National Health and Welfare has advocated the view that she already expressed in this House, that it was time to initiate an annual guaranteed income system. This is why I said earlier that I am convinced that even on the government side there is no consensus on all those points. It does not mean that we should relinquish this system. It means that we must work further and that all studies made at the federal-provincial conference level about

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

the necessity to establish an annual guaranteed income system should be continued.

Today, in reply to a question from an opposition member the Prime Minister said that Canadians had to be more productive to become competitive on the international market. I entirely agree with him. There is one solution to encourage a greater input in the gross national product. It is to give youth the opportunity to contribute all their energy, their efficacy and their knowledge. At the same time, Canadian mothers would be given a chance to fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and wives, if we give them the security to which they are entitled.

● (1712)

[English]

Mr. W. Kenneth Robinson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) for bringing forth a motion filled with the things we are all concerned about, that is, having sufficient income on which to live. He mentioned that the family is the basic unit. I certainly agree with that and I hope we will continue to feel that the basic unit is the family unit. I understand the hon. member has a large family. Maybe that is why he is so concerned about this kind of motion—he could use two salaries instead of one! I think he is pointing to the same kind of situation for many people in this country who find that one paycheck at the end of the week is not enough and that you actually need two in order to have a decent standard of living.

The motion put forward by the hon. member for Bellechasse regarding the payment of an allowance for housewives who remain at home to take care of the family instead of joining the labour market, touches the issue of income distribution and the status of women, matters which are of great concern to this government as I believe they have been of long standing concern to many others.

The motion essentially asks the government to consider in its over-all, ongoing study of income distribution and income maintenance, the specific role which allowances to housewives who remain at home to take care of their families, could play in the package of income distribution measures which constitutes the government's income policy at present and in the future.

● (1722)

I would like to respond to the hon. member's motion by reviewing some of the issues that are implied. Current studies by the Department of National Health and Welfare already have given considerable attention to many of these points; they are not new to me. I can do justice to the issues at hand by sharing some of my thinking on the subject with hon. members.

At the outset I would like to make particular mention of the fact that to focus on the needs of low income earners and single parent families as two specific target populations for the