

Family Allowances Act, 1973

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Would the Hon. Member please sit down? He has just been informed by the Chair that he did not raise a point of order. I can hardly recognize the same Member on the same point of order, since there is none.

Mr. Gimaïel: This is on another point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Well, the Hon. Member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Gimaïel), on another point of order.

Mr. Gimaïel: Mr. Speaker, I am raising a point of order because I cannot allow the Hon. Member to influence me with respect to the kind of work I am doing as a Member of this House. He said that he did not have any confidence in the work being done by Quebec Members. The Members from Quebec in the House—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I am very sorry, but the Hon. Member for Lac-Saint-Jean is an experienced parliamentarian, and he is stretching our interpretation of a point of order to its very limits.

The Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes).

Mr. Hawkes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are now quite a few Progressive Conservative Members who have studied French because we are aware that Liberal Members from the Province of Quebec are not always able to tell their fellow citizens in that province the truth. We must support the use of French in order to be able to speak out against the Members from the Province of Quebec.

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of difficulty that the country is in. It is difficult enough and takes a lot of goodwill for us to communicate in the two official languages of Canada. Government policies that make that difficult should be avoided and it is up to the Members of this House to straighten out such abuses, because Cabinet does not do it.

That takes me directly to the economic situation in Canada today. It is a difficult one, and in that difficult climate there are civil servants who give advice to Ministers who bring this advice to this House in the form of legislation. This week we are dealing with legislation which would cut assistance to Canadian families and pension assistance to Canadian senior citizens.

There may be a time in the history of Canada when such a policy is warranted. May I suggest that now is not the time. The difficulty in Canada today is not excessively high interest rates, as it might have been six months or a year ago. The difficulty is a lack of confidence, a psychological difficulty. The citizens of this country are not spending, they are not buying; they are saving and they are reducing debts. As a consequence we have a million and a half unemployed because there is not anybody willing or with the confidence to make the big ticket purchases, to buy cars, refrigerators, an extra pair of shoes, clothes or a little extra food. That is the difficulty we are in.

The new "Messiah of Finance" some three or four months ago went public with his personal preference, his personal

intention of cutting all assistance to families in the form of Family Allowances. The wisdom of the caucus, I presume, prevailed over the wisdom of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde). After three months of discourse we have more or less some assurance that there is no intention to cut Family Allowances altogether.

But consider the three months of economic costs, which came about as a consequence solely of the statements made by the Minister of Finance. People out there in all our ridings, ridings held by Liberals, New Democrats or Conservatives, people in those ridings got scared because in the difficulty that we are in today in Canada people are afraid that next month, or three months down the road, they may not be able to put food on the table for their children. They are afraid that they may not be able to pay their rent. They are afraid that they may not be able to pay their mortgage payments.

Senior citizens are worried. I have many times in this House brought to the attention of Ministers and backbenchers in the Liberal Party the fact that there is a definite correlation between increased unemployment and all the stress-related impacts on society. Crimes of violence, heart attacks, suicides and mental hospital admissions increase as unemployment increases. All of these kinds of social costs are a consequence of increasing unemployment.

In committee this morning the first thing that astonished me was that the Minister would not admit that that correlation exists, that it is scientifically validated from many, many sources. But even more astonishing was the Minister's admission that the Cabinet of Canada, supported by the Liberal backbenchers, have decided that spending priority number one shall be the buying of service stations, rather than the provision of funds to old age pensioners and people on Family Allowances.

This Bill before us today—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Schroder: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Hon. Member would not want to mislead the House, but he did not quote correctly what the Minister said. What the Minister said was that she was interested in job creation—

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That is not a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I should advise the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary that at the second reading stage the Parliamentary Secretary or the Minister will have the opportunity for reply. The remarks just made by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary are debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): They will reply.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, one of the advantages of a committee meeting is that we have a written transcript, and every Member of the House can check what is said.

Miss Bégin: Exactly, and we will look at it.

Mr. Hawkes: The Minister did not talk about job creation but said that the purchase of British Petroleum service stations