

*Family Allowances Act*

The Opposition will say this reduction is only marginal and hardly significant.

Mr. Speaker, I think they forget that to these families \$5 can make all the difference.

We must remember that those families and we meet them in the course of our work, where one person has full responsibility for one or two children in many cases depend on welfare. They wonder how they can afford to send their children back to school in the fall, because of all the expense involved. They worry because the family allowance they get seems hardly enough to start the school year. For these people, \$20 when you have to live in that kind of situation—it is simply disastrous, and I think that justifies opposing the passage of this Bill most aggressively.

Besides, the principle of these cuts has already been clearly established, and I would like to quote from a document entitled: "Securing Economic Renewal", in the Budget Papers, where it says:

Net federal expenditures will be reduced by approximately \$15 million in fiscal year 1985-86 and \$40 million in 1986-87. Provincial tax revenues will not be affected in 1985-86 and only marginally in 1986-87.

Thus, it is clear from the start that the purpose of the Bill is to save money and add to the Government's revenues.

The justification given for a decision of this kind is, of course, the size of the national debt and the fact that the country's ability to pay has become problematic. We can accept the argument up to this point, that is, academically and theoretically speaking. Except for the rich, as my colleague so rightfully points out.

● (1250)

Canada's present financial situation is a matter of fact for everybody, rich and poor alike. But the problem, the catastrophe, the drama is that we are so indulgent towards the rich, we are making unbelievable concessions to them. To the poor, to old age security pension recipients and to others who cannot do without drugs we say: You have a social burden, you shoulder a responsibility and so you must share the problems facing this country.

And then we turn around and think nothing of granting generous tax concessions to oil companies, we readily support banks, and we make all kinds of decisions in favour of individuals who we know full well can indeed pay their own way.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that it is imperative and essential to correct the situation. As a matter of fact, the recurrent theme advocated by our friends opposite throughout the election campaign can be summed up by the word generosity. I doubt if I ever heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) rise to speak without saying that we had to be generous, particularly towards underprivileged people. Generous here, there and everywhere.

Well, this Government has indeed been very generous, extremely so. The problem is that it has been generous towards people who, in the circumstances, could also be generous and accept to share part of the financial burden, if only to give some respite to men and women who simply cannot support our ever increasing financial load.

Here is a statement made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), whom my colleague rightfully dubbed the social injustice minister: "The stability of our social fabric is guaranteed by the family and our attachment to the community. As Minister of National Health and Welfare, my role is to give directions and take initiatives designed to strengthen the role of the family and give it more importance than ever in our society". As a philosophy it seems encouraging and reassuring for those who are anxiously waiting to see what the future has in store for them.

Those people are sitting at home watching TV and wondering what they can do. How can I show my disapproval? How can I say I disagree? They are totally help less. They cannot afford to hire lobbyists. They cannot afford to have friends close to the system express their discontent. However, they are the ones who have the most crying need for those crumbs, for those amounts which I know are marginal but still something important for them. And there are people asking us: How is it that you the managers of this country cannot find the money, the big money of course, because \$50 million have been mentioned, which we need to enjoy at least the same stability we had under the Liberal Government when you find the money needed to help out banks, to buy icebreakers, to change armed forces uniforms and to allow so many other usually harebrained expenditures? I must honestly say that unfortunately I do not know the answer.

Look at the party opposite. I was listening yesterday to the Minister of State (Small Businesses) (Mr. Bissonnette) bragging about inflation and about interest rates. But Canadians are not that dumb. They know quite well that today's inflation and interest rates are not the result of steps taken by the Government, by the party opposite, but the result of those taken before this Government ever came to power. When things are going badly they say that it is the fault of the previous Government and when inflation and interest rates are low they say we owe it to the previous Government.

Before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to do exactly as you did on the issue of old age security pensions that is to back down as you did when you acknowledged that you were wrong about that. Please do now what you did for medicine and for old age security pensions and the opposition members will back you up.

[English]

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, in the last 30 or 40 years, we have seen some very important programs adopted in this country, programs which have improved the lot of most Canadians. I am thinking of the Unemploy-