

improves, he will be asking Cabinet to approve measures to enrich the support provided to lower income families with children, and to better protect that enriched level of support from inflation.

Another concern that has been raised about this package of reforms, Mr. Speaker, is that while more money is total will go to the lowest income families with children than under the current system, there will be a reduction in the purchasing power of the monthly family allowance cheque, and that this will be a difficult adjustment, particularly for low-income parents who find themselves too often with too much month left at the end of the money. Again that is a valid concern so far as it goes, but it needs to be placed in perspective.

The fact is that while in theory the family allowance has been fully indexed to inflation since 1974, in fact the degree of inflation protection has been significantly less than that. In 1976, 1979, 1983, and 1984 under the previous Government, inflation protection was either reduced or eliminated in times of high inflation. In 1979 the family allowance was even reduced \$5.68 per child per month from its 1978 level as part of a more general reform of the child benefits system. The result, Mr. Speaker, is that if what is proposed in this Bill had been in place uninterrupted since 1974, that is, indexing above 3 per cent increases in the CPI, family allowances would have been \$6.88 per child per month higher in 1985 than they were in fact under theoretical full indexing.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleagues that the Minister recognizes the importance of the monthly family allowance cheque in the day-to-day budgeting of low-income parents. He is prepared to examine a more periodic payment of the child tax credit to such families to deal with that concern, although Members should be aware that many low-income parents prefer to receive the child tax credit, as they do at present, in a lump sum so that they can use it for large purchases such as clothing or appliances.

Let me repeat to those who have raised concerns in the House and elsewhere that the gains for low-income families with children under this package of reforms are less substantial than they ought to be, and less insulated from inflation than they ought to be after 1991. The Minister shares their concern and the Government hopes to bring forward an effective response well before 1991.

Those who have called attention to the importance of the purchasing power of the monthly family allowance cheque for low-income parents have raised the legitimate point that something less than full indexing for all parents may be a more effective solution for those people. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, some Members of the Opposition have been content with expressing legitimate, or even arguable concerns about this Bill. Whether out of ignorance or malice, or some combination of the two, they have seized upon a relatively minor clause in this Bill designed to deal with a very limited number of tragic situations, a clause which has been for some time in other income security legislation, and used it to sow unnecessary apprehension and even distress among the parents of missing children in the country.

### *Family Allowances Act, 1973*

I refer, of course, to Clause 5 of this Bill which allows the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), upon being satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that the death of a child on whose behalf family allowance is being received has occurred, to determine a date, for the purposes of this Act, of the death of the child without waiting for or being bound by death certificates issued by other authorities.

When the Bill came before the House for second reading the first Member to raise objection to this clause was the Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps). Her line was taken up in that debate and later in committee by many other Opposition Members, notably the Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) and the Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart). The latter took his opposition to the point of exploiting the case of a particular parent of a missing child by misrepresenting to the mother the motive and effect of this proposed clause, and by continuing in these misrepresentations in statements to the press after he had ample opportunity in committee and in conversations with officials of the Department to educate himself as to the real purpose and effect of this clause.

Those of us who have been in the House for some years, Mr. Speaker, know that when Members see something in a Bill which they do not understand, or which appears ambiguous, there is a proper code conduct to follow. You phone or approach the Minister of the Minister's staff. You ask for an explanation or clarification. If it is satisfactory, the matter ends there. If not, you raise it publicly.

I understand that the time allocated has now expired.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. It being 4.45 p.m., it is my duty, pursuant to Order made on Tuesday, January 14, 1986, to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the Bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is the following one. Mr. Epp (Provencher), seconded by Mr. Hnatyshyn, moves that Bill C-70, an Act to amend the Family Allowances Act, 1973, be read the third time and do pass. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some Hon. Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.