

*Oral Questions*

• (1450)

I realize that may not sound like a large sum of money, but it is an important sum of money that will help parents clothe their children and maintain a household. At least it is going in the right direction. As the economy improves and as we can get better fiscal order in the management of the government's affairs, we will be able to do better.

What we have today is a very difficult challenge of balancing the needs of families and the needs of Canadians with the fiscal reality we must face. We are trying to do our best.

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

In columns 4 and 5 of table 4.3 on page 137 of *The Budget Papers* it is clearly stated that for a family earning \$50,000 a year with two children the difference between the new and the old programs is simply \$44 a year or less than \$4 per month.

In the budget the government has asked 600,000 Canadian women to give up their family allowances in order to "help children who are suffering in Canada for no good reason at all". There are now over 2.5 million Canadians dependent on social assistance who will not be covered by the child tax benefit. If the system is not designed to help the poorest of the poor, how can the minister defend the end to universal family allowances?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, based on the question the member raises I would like to correct what I consider to be two mistakes.

The first is that the poor people on social assistance will continue to get family allowance. It is there, \$1,020 a child, and it will remain.

Second, the federal money we provide to the provinces through the CAP is \$6.5 billion and it goes directly to those on social assistance. For example, they have transportation, prescriptions, and sometimes even housekeeping benefits, money which is not available to low income workers. That is exactly the reason we have put the emphasis on that category of people. Basically women with \$15,000 a year receive fewer direct benefits than those who are on social assistance.

**PRINTING INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

The Canadian printing industry which employs some 78,000 people is being systematically undermined by the United States customs service's arbitrary use of country of origin rules to protect American printers and to impede Canadian exports to the United States.

As in the Honda and in the softwood lumber instances, this is another example of the Americans exploiting the free trade agreement to serve their own protectionist ends.

I ask the minister: What is the government doing to prevent these abuses of the free trade agreement and to ensure the survival of the Canadian printing industry?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, this might have been a question more appropriately put to my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue. Since my colleague raised it with me yesterday I am pleased to respond to it.

The Minister of National Revenue has written to the Canadian Printing Industry Association reviewing the administration of this particular matter and also discussing with it a basis for implementing this policy in a way that would provide a level playing field between companies in the United States and Canada.

My hon. friend should know that one of the objectives we have in the North American free trade negotiations is to deal with this particular problem. We tried to deal with it in the U.S.-Canada negotiations. We were not successful at that time but it remains an objective in the upcoming negotiations.

**Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister.

We should not be writing to the Canadian industry. We should be taking it up with the Americans. This government is doing absolutely nothing about this trade harassment which costs the Canadian printing industry some 1,700 jobs and on average \$160 million a year in lost opportunities.