

Family Allowances

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to express the same thing, except in reverse. I will be speaking to my friend as well as to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we agree to come to an agreement as to a reasonable time to do this.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE FOR CHILD TAX CREDIT

The House resumed, from Tuesday, November 7, consideration in committee of Bill C-10, to amend the Income Tax Act to provide for a child tax credit and to amend the Family Allowances Act—Mr. Chrétien—Mr. Turner in the chair.

The Deputy Chairman: When the committee rose on Tuesday, November 7, 1978, clause 1 was under consideration.

On clause 1—

Miss Bégin: Mr. Chairman, as you can see from a reading of *Hansard* for Tuesday night, I had not finished my contribution. May I be given a few moments to finish my reply to the hon. member for Broadview?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Agreed.

Miss Bégin: The hon. member for Broadview spoke of a problem which surely does exist, but I do not think we can bring about any change. The problem is the difference between the treatment of common law marriages pursuant to the Income Tax Act, and legal marriages. The hon. member gave an example of two common law parents with two salaries which total more than \$18,000. This mother would be entitled to the child tax credit. If these two people were legally married, they would not qualify for the child tax credit. If common law marriages were recognized under the Income Tax Act, the door would be open to uncontrollable situations. Because of that, I do not see any valid amendment to the bill presently under study. Common law marriages do not have the factor of stability which legal marriages have. That is the basis around which the social policy in Canada has been built. I think this is accepted by hon. members.

● (1552)

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Chairman, I should like to enter into this debate for a few moments. I would like to have an explanation from the minister concerning what I consider to be major differences between the speech she made during the debate on this bill, and the speeches she made before the bill was

introduced. I am referring to the area in her speeches relating to the extent and depth of poverty in this country.

First I will refer to a couple of examples, and then I will put on the record what is the real situation in the country, for the benefit of all hon. members. On Tuesday, November 7, as reported at page 883 of *Hansard*, the minister said:

However, in the last ten years absolute poverty in Canada, as given by the indicators of Statistics Canada, has been reduced from 20 per cent to 12 per cent.

She said the same thing in the speech which she gave when the House was considering second reading of the bill. The minister should think about the statements which she made the other night and compare them with the statements which she made in a speech to the Sherbrooke Federal Liberal Association. Her speech was made on March 13, 1978, and it is entitled, "The Myths of Social Policy". She was referring to the dangers of people not understanding what is going on in the country when she said:

That danger is that in the current swing of the political pendulum we will overlook the needs of millions of Canadians who are far less fortunate than we are. It is, after all, very easy to turn our backs on poverty.

Later on in the speech she said:

Many, many Canadians believe these myths; you may believe some of them too. But many others know differently. The others are found among the 600,000 working families who must spend two thirds or more of their income to provide the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. They are among the nearly two million children living in families with incomes that are inadequate for their needs. They are among the hundreds of thousands of elderly who live below the poverty line.

Further on in the speech she said:

—Canada's poor families are getting along on an average of one seventh of the income of families in the upper one fifth of our population.

She was referring to her audience when she used the word "you", and I am sure she would say the same thing about members of parliament.

She continued:

You are likely all in that upper one fifth. Divide your family income by seven and try to imagine what it would be like living on that one seventh.

What happened to the minister between March and November? In March she made that speech, and in November she came into the House to explain and defend the bill which is a good one. Surely the minister knows that there is poverty in Canada. I do not know if anyone else on that side of the House or any other cabinet minister realizes that. The minister was aware of that fact last March. Thus, I cannot understand how she reached the position which she has taken in this debate.

In the minister's speech on second reading, she created the impression that we did not have much poverty, yet approximately two days ago she referred to the fact that the percentage of Canadians living in poverty has dropped from 20 per cent to 12 per cent.

The figures reported by Statistics Canada do not bear out the 12 per cent referred to by the minister. In its fifth annual review in 1968, the Economic Council of Canada indicated that, based on figures from the 1961 and 1965 census, 20 per cent of Canadians were living below the poverty line at that