

Canada Child Care Act

against that? They simply say that we should take no action because they do not like the action that is proposed.

We heard mention of other features of this system, and nobody is arguing that the national strategy implemented by Bill C-144 is the be-all and end-all. As I said, it is part of that evolutionary process. It is part of going down the road to an ultimate solution to day care and child care in Canada.

Let us talk about the need for day care. I think that is what the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues are forgetting. We have in Canada at the moment a real need. Some would argue that people should be left to their own devices in order to provide for their children. Some would say that providing a system of child care is encouraging women to leave the home. While we understand and appreciate the views of all our people, I think, on balance, we recognize that women in the workforce, married women with children in the workforce, are part of our society in this day and age. I think every Member of this House and most of the public accept that.

I think it is important to note that this is in fact reflected in the statistics. We have 60 per cent of women who care for children under five years of age in the labour force today. If we were to create a situation in which those women could not remain in the labour force but had to return to the home to look after their children, we would dramatically increase the number of Canadian families below the poverty level.

I understand that with a statistic of 850,000 families below the poverty level that would increase that number of families by almost a half-million. I think that that is an argument in itself for prompting the House of Commons and the Parliament of Canada to take immediate steps to assist the situation so that we will not have that reversal and we will proceed on the road to economic equality and not reverse our process.

One thing I have always noticed in my involvement with the social services field is that it becomes, in the words of a current TV advertisement, a "pay now or pay later" situation. If we do not provide the assistance required by Canadians, particularly young Canadians and indeed children, we will simply pay for it later in other kinds of social costs.

The ultimate cost is that of keeping a person in prison. That is the ultimate failure of society in providing social assistance to our citizens. We end up paying what we refuse to pay in child care and in other social services and benefits, in the cost of maintaining the person in a prison institution. That is really why we have to continue to look at our social services programs to determine whether they are adequate to keep all Canadians and all Canadian families moving in the direction of progress.

We just had an election in Nova Scotia, and we got used to listening to the hollow complaints of opponents, people who denigrate and criticize the system and so on. We have heard in Nova Scotia from the New Democratic Party, its view of a new world and its criticism of the existing world. What happened? It won two seats, down from its current holding of

three seats. Some 30 of 52 candidates lost their deposits in the Nova Scotia election. The Leader of the New Democratic Party, that paragon of virtue, won her seat by 26 votes, and that is currently under recount.

Members of the New Democratic Party have no monopoly on virtue. They have no right to preach to the people of Canada and to tell them what to do, because the people of Canada, particularly those taxpayers who are directly involved in government expenditures, know what kind of services they can afford. They are now squawking. They have come to life and they are worried. Nationally, they are saying the same things that their counterparts in Nova Scotia said, and it was rejected. They have dropped in popular vote. Their two winning candidates only had 36 per cent of the vote, the minimum required for victory. When we hear them talk and shout, we know that very few people are listening, and thank God for that.

With that in mind, I want to review briefly in the time remaining the provisions of Bill C-144. We have all heard that Bill C-144 sets out the national strategy for child care. That national strategy is to build on the existing system, to take advantage of 20 years of accumulated experience of people involved in institutions like St. Joseph's Children's Centre in Halifax. We should not throw that out and start again because of some ideological position taken by some political pundit in the New Democratic Party or by the back-benchers of the Liberal Party. We have to add to what has become an evolutionary and sensible system.

What is the Government of Canada going to do? It is going to pay 50 per cent of the cost of child care across Canada in all its aspects, up from 35 per cent. Who could possibly oppose that? The Government is going to spend \$6.4 billion over seven years, and it is going to add 200,000 new subsidized child care spaces.

The Leader of the Opposition told us: "Oh, no, they are not going to do that, because there is going to be over 300,000 subsidized child care spaces created in the normal course". If the normal course creates 300,000 new spaces, then we will have 500,000 spaces in Canada because the goal and determination of the Government is to create 200,000 new subsidized spaces. Again we hear the Opposition saying: "This won't happen. Don't pass the Bill because that won't happen".

My advice to opposition Members on behalf of the people of Canada is: "Let it pass. See if it does not happen. If there is no new subsidized child care spaces, then you can come back and complain. You will not even need to do that, because the people of Canada will know what has happened. Do not stop the progress and the measure because you fear some evil resulting from it that might adversely affect the political interest of the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party. Let it go ahead in all its evilness, and see what difficulty transpires".

I know and I think that the members of the Opposition know—