

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

had the experience of adopting children and knows the traumatic experience of the changing lives of families in this area, I was happy the motion came forward. I have adopted children myself and certainly know the change in the family situation that takes place as a result.

The hon. member mentioned in his dissertation the expanding welfare society, and I was glad he raised that question because this government has been criticized by the opposition in the last few days for the expenditures it has made over the years. The expanding welfare society has been criticized by the opposition on many occasions, as has the help this government has given to all segments of society. Even the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has criticized the way this government has been in the forefront with programs to fully suit the people of this country.

This motion proposes to advance that welfare to an area which is very important. The phenomenon of adoption in Canadian society is changing rapidly, and I think government policy must take into account the concerns of a great many people. As has been already indicated, the question before us today is that of the most appropriate means of dealing with what appears to be a most legitimate social concern. I think all hon. members would agree that it is a concern.

The hon. member who put the motion said that abortions have obviously reduced the potential number of adoptable children in this country. I wonder if that is a sign of our times—a sign of irresponsibility, not only to each other but also to the unborn. It is evident, in the area that I represent, that there is an overwhelming rubber-stamping of abortion under the guise of therapeutic abortion. It is very difficult for anybody who has not adopted children to understand the traumatic experience of people who are without children but who want to share the love of family life not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of the children. I have talked to many friends about this who have attempted to adopt children in the last five or six years. My wife and I were very fortunate, Mr. Speaker: we were able to adopt before our fourth and fifth came along.

I think what we have done in society is forget the importance of love itself and the love of giving.

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

**Mr. Condon:** It has been mentioned by the hon. member who proposed this motion that there are financial circumstances to be considered. Certainly, raising children today is not easy and it is not cheap; but I think we should be looking in another direction and forgetting the monetary and financial circumstances. We should be looking at the circumstances of love that we should have for children who are adopted. You often see accounts in the newspapers of children who are beaten. Just recently, in the London area, a six-year old child was allowed to starve to death. I wonder what possibility there would have been of a six-year old child starving to death 25 years ago? Has that possibility passed because of our demand for money, for gain, for wealth, forgetting the basics of family life?

[Mr. Condon.]

Just as important, in my view, is the question of whether the needs of the adopted child can be met in the environment of the adopting family. With the social services we have today in all provinces, I am convinced that a complete investigation and must be made to ensure for that child a future of family happiness. Some of the factors considered in the evaluation of a prospective home are that the marriage be stable, there be emotional stability and financial security. Emotional stability may be there, but as I am sure hon. members will agree, financial security is not really the key to family life. That is based on love and affection between parent and child, child and parent, brother and sister; that is the basis of stable family life.

Another factor is that parents demonstrate their ability to handle the problems that will arise in adoptive situations. I think this would come under the heading of emotional stability. I do not feel the giving of a parent, or the grasping of a child for family life would in any way impede the love and affection and emotional ability of a parent who is giving love, and the child who is giving it back. I think it is fair to say, however, that as a result of the investigations carried out by the Children's Aid Society, most families have adequate income. In fact some Children's Aid Societies ask adoptive parents to provide a supervising parent for up to six months. I cannot agree with that. Anyone who is going to adopt a child is going to be prepared to rear it as his own.

● (1730)

I agree with the hon. member who presented this motion that this area seems to be basically one of provincial responsibility. This is obviously an important factor to be taken into account in any deliberation we may decide to pursue. It would seem to me essential that, before taking any form of decision, we undertake discussions with the appropriate provincial authorities.

Another prime factor to be considered is quite obviously that societal values are changing rapidly with regard to adoption, and these changing values are being reflected in the way in which provincial and private agencies administer their adoption programs. It would have been virtually unheard of ten or 15 years ago for a single parent to adopt a child. While it is still far from the norm, it is happening now, and as it becomes more and more common such practice will raise a number of questions in terms of the adequacy of our social programs, and facilities such as day care centres. This party has been the leader in social reform with regard to day care centres and meeting the needs of those who are not as well off as the ordinary individual. This government has brought in these programs over the last few years.

Personally I think adoptive parents play an absolutely essential role in our society, although I am aware that the extent of adoption is declining somewhat because of the increasing tendency among single mothers to keep their babies. This is, of course, another area of concern entirely, but it does have a bearing on the over-all question of adoption. It is no longer a question of a large surplus of unwanted babies being available