

The Address—Mr. Epp

I know members of the Opposition did not expect the child care package to be mentioned in the Throne Speech because they had a certain fixation about what they thought the Government was all about. I want to tell them that the Prime Minister made a commitment in the debate held during the 1984 election campaign that, if elected Prime Minister, he would collectively, with the provinces, with parent groups and with child care advocacy groups put forward a task force, not to debate once again if there should be child care but how best we could implement it, how best may we help families and how best we may help women who are in the paid workforce. He tied it together as well with pension reform, making a total package. I am proud to be serving with a Prime Minister who fulfils his commitments and promises.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Just today, the Prime Minister and Mila launched Family Week. Why? Because we—I hear NDP'ers chuckling.

Mr. Riis: There are 51 other weeks for families as well, Jake.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Shame, shame. That is just the point I was going to get to. He said that it is not only one week but 52 weeks. Would Hon. Members not want to support, and should Hon. Members not support a Prime Minister and a Government that has put forward positive models of success? I wish Hon. Members would support that.

Mr. Riis: Tell that to the family farm out in your own province, Jake.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Now that I have their attention, perhaps we may continue. We have talked about pension reform. We have talked about the need for child care. I have said very clearly to the House today that the Prime Minister will be carrying forward this agenda item at the First Ministers' Conference in November, and we look for support, not only from the provinces and from various groups but, we would hope, from both Opposition Parties which have made this point an issue as well.

The other point I wish to address today is that social policy concerns a number of problems that deprive so many Canadians of a secure and happy life. These are the problems of family violence, child abuse, pornography and juvenile prostitution. I realize, and I am sure other Hon. Members as well realize, that we cannot and do not believe we can resolve or remove, through the Government only, drug abuse as a social evil. However, we have especially sought to emphasize prevention and to help people pick up the pieces when prevention has not worked.

The Government has moved strongly in the area of child sexual abuse and pornography legislation which will be brought back into the House and will include legislation dealing with juvenile prostitution. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) will have more to say about that. These programs

and their success will be achieved only as we look at lives that are put back together and as potential abuse is prevented.

In the remainder of my time, I wish to address the issue of drug abuse, a continuation of our desire to improve the quality of life in the nation's communities and in our families.

The Prime Minister referred earlier this fall to the Government's intention to develop a national drug strategy. I and my colleagues, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher), the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. MacKay), the Minister of State for Youth (Mr. Charest), the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. McKnight) as well as the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mr. Jelinek) have all been working since the spring to develop a comprehensive approach to the problem of drug abuse. Our concern about drugs is not recent. Hon. Members of the House know of my own campaign in the areas of tobacco and alcohol abuse. These too are drugs and their abuse costs Canada millions of dollars in health care and a price that cannot be calculated in personal and family tragedy.

I would suggest that we are winning in the war against inappropriate advertising particularly targeted to youth of tobacco and alcohol and there is an unparalleled awareness of the dangers of smoking and the abuse of alcohol. We are making good progress, but the problem of illicit drugs is more profound because of the international networks, the hidden character of drug marketing and the enormous risks of drug dependency which include medical emergencies and, of course, death.

We do not believe that the problem of drug abuse is uniformly reflected across the country. Any Hon. Member of the House who has visited our communities knows that that is the case. What is important is that the Government is determined to attack this urgent problem and we will do so methodically and in keeping with the Canadian way of responding to social needs. It is the Canadian way to deal with a problem like this by emphasizing public education and awareness, rehabilitation of the victims of drug abuse and primary prevention of the demand as well as to rely on law enforcement and legislative measures to curtail supply.

We do not see the victim of drug abuse as having no responsibility for having used or misused drugs. We are aware, however, of the pressures that often lead people down that slippery slope to drug dependency, and once they have begun that slide they have for practical purposes become victims. If we cannot be completely effective in primary prevention, we must emphasize rehabilitation of victims.

Action must be taken on several fronts. First, there must be federal leadership in bringing together the efforts of the provinces and communities in reducing the demand for drugs.

Second, there must be increased efforts to stop the production and distribution of illicit drugs. Reduction measures will include public awareness, education, research and hopefully a variety of provincial activities.