

*Supply*

that had been sharply honed over the years to frustrate the work of Parliament, this could be a very long time.

Now events took over and an election was called. It seems strange that these two opposition parties, which have done everything in their power to prevent a National Day Care Act, are now attacking us for not introducing the bill once again. The public will not be fooled by these antics. Now let us look realistically at just what the federal government promised. It is true that during the election we indicated the bill would be reintroduced. However during the course of the election and immediately following it, many citizens concerned about day care urged us not to reintroduce this bill.

I am not talking only about those who did not believe the federal government ought to be lending its support to influence parental decisions as to whether or not parents should enter the work force. I am referring to groups which have a strong and continuing commitment to day care services. They argued that a different approach ought to be taken.

In addition to these concerns expressed by many in the day care community, the federal government found that the economic climate facing us was also very different from that of 1988. We had been hit with an economic slow-down. Falling revenues and rising expenditures were leading to a dangerous situation that, if not controlled, would have threatened the well-being of Canada.

Any citizen who found himself in such a situation would of course have taken prudent action. This was exactly what the federal government did. It recognized that our deficit was too large and was growing at an alarming rate. Therefore it took an aggressive approach to deficit reduction.

It knew full well this approach would involve some pain, but if also knew the long-term benefits demanded these actions. Consequently the federal government announced that a number of plans, including those for child care, would be put on temporary hold.

During this same period we listened carefully to the various new points that were being put forward relating to day care. You will recall the government stated on numerous occasions that it would consult with and listen to the views of Canadians.

The minister of the day responsible for day care frequently assured the House and all Canadians who made inquiries that a strategy would be in place during this government's current mandate.

The minister of the day, as well as other members of the government, made it clear they were not committed specifically to reintroducing another bill, Bill C-144. Our position was that Bill C-144 might be reintroduced, but another approach could possibly be taken, depending on further consultation and serious reflection on the information being received.

Our government would determine the exact nature of the strategy to be announced and implemented. It is also very clear that contrary to what the members in opposition would have us believe, promises were not specifically made about day care. The federal government listened to Canadians from every walk of life and knew that the problems being addressed were broader than day care.

That is precisely why the federal government steadfastly used the term child care rather than day care.

I want to speak to this further in a moment. However I want to speak about the situation that currently faces Canadians. Certainly the situation in 1992 is very different from that of 1984, when the government first announced its intention to launch a national child care program. Every major western country is feeling the impact of the recession. Every government, regardless of its political ideology or leanings, has had to come to grips with this new reality.

• (1210)

All members of this House recognize that Canada is not an isolationist country. Our own social and economic environment is directly influenced by what happens to our major trading partners. Any government that does not recognize there is a new spirit of competition abroad, affecting every country, will soon be left in the abyss of a stagnant and deteriorating economy.

The federal government does not bemoan these changing circumstances. It firmly believes that Canadian physical resources and personal expertise are second to none, however like any wise country, we need to streamline and modernize our competitive edge. The rewards will go to those who are not fearful of competing in climates of increasing excellence and are willing to make the adjustments necessary to forge ahead.