

a mother feels when she believes her children are not being adequately cared for. We are in urgent need of proper provision for all the children of mothers employed in industry, and when that is provided I believe we shall eliminate one of the causes of the absenteeism which is so rife among our people.

I suggest to the minister that certain things be done immediately. First, I think a survey should be made at once by the boards in the various cities where women are employed in industry, to ascertain exactly the number of women who would be anxious to place their children in day nurseries if adequate facilities were provided; that is, if proper war-time housing were provided and the mothers knew their children would be looked after in properly equipped buildings. That is a very different thing from asking women, as I imagine they are being asked to-day, whether or not they want their children to go into some old building or some church during the time the mother is at work. Second, the government should start at once upon a programme of erecting prefabricated houses in the parks and open spaces, where supervised outdoor play can be provided for the children. Third, the children of all working mothers should be made eligible for these benefits. Fourth, we should greatly extend the training of the principals and assistants who work in these day nurseries, and should pay such salaries as will attract women of the right type and make it possible for us to carry on day nurseries with efficient staffs. Fifth, further provision should be made for organized play centres for school children after school hours, to keep them off the streets. Further, the government should accept responsibility for helping to pay the cost of feeding school children, and the children of all working mothers should be eligible for meals.

I look forward to the time when day nurseries and creches shall become a regular part of our educational system in Canada, under dominion control. I believe that is a necessary part of our social structure. I have listened to many of the post-war plans now being discussed. But I think I am something of a pragmatist; I like to know how things will work. To me a bird in hand is much better than two in the bush. Right now I am not so much concerned about post-war plans as about something which can be done immediately to remedy the situation which exists in our great cities, so as to provide really adequate accommodation by way of free school nurseries and creches, school meals and after-school play and recreation. I would urge the minister to go much further than he has gone, so that this scheme might be made possible.

Mr. MITCHELL: May I first of all thank the hon. member for the tribute she has paid to Mrs. Eaton, the director of this particular phase of the activities of my department. I am not going to argue with my hon. friend as to where a woman should be—whether she should be in the home or in industry, at the conclusion of the war. I have fixed ideas on the point, but anything I would say would be only an expression of opinion, and would not be of interest to the committee.

But if I may be excused for making a personal reference, I was one of a family of nine children. My father died when I was ten years old, and I believe I know something of what a mother is up against when she has to work and, at the same time, maintain her children. In Canada this idea has to be sold to the women of this country. Our people are a little wary about giving their children to what some might consider institutional care. I came from an industrial city, and I believe I could say that was the feeling there. About twenty years ago I played some part in the establishment of widows' pensions in Ontario. I was quite active in the movement that brought that improvement about, one which I believe was adopted by the Ferguson government, if I remember well.

Mr. MacNICOL: And so was I.

Mr. MITCHELL: I think the hon. member will find that this idea has to be sold to the working women of Canada. I believe the great majority of mothers, particularly in Montreal, would rather have their children looked after either by friends or relations. Whether that is right or wrong is not for me or any other person to decide. It is a decision which must be made by each mother.

At least we can be given this credit, that while this is purely a provincial matter, the subject of child care was instituted by the federal government in cooperation with the provinces. This is the first time in the history of Canada that anything of this nature has been set up. There has been some criticism in connection with our using churches. I believe we obtained the best possible person for the establishment of this scheme in Toronto. I refer to Miss Millichamp, a member of the Institute of Child Welfare in Toronto. Not long ago she was invited by the British government to go to England and advise them on their problem over there. She came back with the definite opinion that in Great Britain they had to take the same steps as we have taken here. We must get the best we can, in the present circumstances.

I believe if my hon. friend went to Toronto and saw the places in question first-hand she