

The Family

nuclear, atomic family of the mother, father and perhaps one, two or three children.

We have seen the development of other forms of the family. For example, there is the family in which there are perhaps three generations sharing and caring for one another. We have seen a family of just adults, providing the satisfaction for that need of belonging. We have seen sibling groups form family communities and relationships.

The point I wish to emphasize is that regardless of the form of the family, of how it has changed even in our own lifetimes and how it may change in the balance of this century and into the 21st century, some form of the family will be needed. Therefore, it behooves this Parliament and the Government to take the required steps to strengthen the capability of families, regardless of their varied forms in this country, to meet the needs of men and women of all ages, as well as children.

A major phenomenon of our changing society has been family breakdown. There has been a remarkable increase of divorce, separation and other disruptions of previously normal family ties. That has brought a cost as well as a benefit. It is a cost to the persons who have had to undergo that kind of breakdown. They certainly do not merit judgment by anyone, for I have met so many who have had to suffer more than their deserved share of pain and disappointment. There is a cost to children who very often lose, not only their sense of stability in the society immediately around them but the sense of credibility of those relationships and the credibility of the humanity to whom they want to turn.

I am not unmindful that sometimes, hopefully often, a family breakdown brings benefit. I can only support those who felt they had no other reasonable choice than to bring to an end a relationship that was injurious to them. However, I say that we should not be unmindful of the cost that is borne by the persons participating, and we should note the cost to the national society itself. There is a cost to us all.

What can we do about it? Part of the answer lies in legislation. We have addressed that through reforms to the Divorce Act that provide, among other things, for tighter administration of court orders for support. We have addressed those problems that legislation can solve, but legislation cannot meet every need.

There are some needs that can be satisfied much better by education. We need to remind ourselves over and over again that the law is not only a regulator, it is an educator. The law, by means open to it, transmits ideas, convictions and understanding that are part of developing a healthy society.

We have seen in our time that education is not only a matter of that which is communicated in classrooms, but that there is a great classroom that has no walls—the classroom of the country itself. One of the most powerful means of education today lies in television which, for good and often for ill, educates the populous throughout the day and night.

This motion calls on the Government to seriously consider adopting an education program, of which television would be a part, to communicate the values of family life to our people. I hope that the House will support this motion. I hope the Government will take the required steps to realize it and thereby fulfil a commitment contained in the Throne Speech when, on the advice of the Government, Her Excellency said: "My Government will take steps to strengthen the family in Canada". Such an education program as I suggest in this motion would bring about such a strengthening.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very carefully, and I have every respect for the Hon. Member's views on the family. However, it seems to me that his motion was addressed mainly to the traditional family and marriage.

I think that if the present Government—if the Hon. Member wants communications programs on the family, we would have to ensure that the image presented by these programs is not just the traditional one. And I say this because when we look at the report published by the Quebec advisory committee on family policy last year, one of the major reports on the subject, it says that the majority of families today are not traditional, and that for the past ten years, if I am not mistaken, only 20 per cent of families in Quebec have been two-parent families. I think the national figure is 19 per cent. So I don't mind sponsoring a communications program on marriage and the family, provided it would also consider what is happening in 1986 and what will happen in 1990. Another point is that we should not force these values on Canadian men and women. Today, I think the supportive approach is preferable. We must remember that the majority of our families are single-parent families headed by women, and that when we present the image of a traditional family, it is one where the wife or mother stays home.

I want to be very clear on this. Let there be no mistake about my intentions. I am not condemning the traditional family, on the contrary. But I think that in society today, there are very few families where women have the option of staying home. When we consider the economics of the issue and when we consider the cost of educating children—we should remember that in 42 per cent of married couples with children, the woman has to work outside the home.

Talking about marriage is fine, but I think it would be advisable to look at the report on the family published last year, where it discusses the traditional marriage, the life expectancy of a marriage, and so forth. The family is very important, and it is definitely the wellspring of society, but in 1986, there are more nuclear families than traditional families.

When we talk about the family, I think it is very important to consider the parents' jobs, the women's jobs. We must discuss the position of women on the labour market. We should discuss the possibility of part-time work for most working mothers who have to supplement the family's