

Time Allocation

● (1310)

To suggest that it is putting all this extra money into child care is absolute nonsense. We know that in the next seven years we certainly would, under the Canada Assistance Plan, get the same number of spaces as we would have now. We also know that what would happen is that we would not cut off the Canada Assistance Plan, which is going to happen now, as soon as the provinces decide that they want to become part of this plan. It means that many of those families that are in real need, the families of low-income and poor families, are the ones that are not going to be able to get access to child care. That is a real disgrace.

We have seen the effects of what happened under an insensitive Government in wartime. Certainly we are redressing today some of the things that happened to Japanese Canadians. If this measure goes through, what it is really saying again is that we have an insensitive Government that does not care about what happens to our children in the present or our children in the future.

This kind of child care strategy is no child care strategy at all. What the Government is doing is deleting the ability to use the Canada Assistance Plan. What it is doing is allowing for tax expenditures to be part of the expenditure of the child care program, which really is not adding to spaces at all. What it is doing is putting money into the pockets of the people who now can afford child care. That is not the issue at all. The issue is the two million children out there who have no kind of quality care.

There has been some talk about how maybe we as the New Democratic Party would like to centralize all of the delivery of that service. We are certainly not talking about that at all. This Party would like to see a decentralization of service with some guarantee that there would be quality care, whether one is in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Newfoundland, British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, or wherever. That certainly is not central control. What it is saying is that any child in Canada has the right to some quality care. This Government has consistently refused to put in any kind of national objectives. Sometimes I wonder how members of this Government think they grew up themselves. It seems to me that they love to talk about it being fine if parents would stay at home and look after their children.

I think we have to look at the reality that if we take the lowest salary of the two-income family away we will find that 64 per cent of those families are living in poverty. Two people are not working just for the luxury of working. Two people in a family today are working because they are trying to provide a home, a shelter, education and nurturing for their children.

Surely the Government should recognize that its responsibility is to be able to assist that. It does not matter where Canadians and Canadian families are living. It is most important that we have some kind of a child care policy that says that those children are guaranteed quality care. But this Government is insensitive. It is uncaring. It likes to package things in a cosmetic, superficial way that pretends it is doing things when it is doing nothing. It is terrified to expose itself to

an open debate in which the Canadian people can really understand what a sham this legislation is. This is an insult to the intelligence of Canadians.

The only good thing that can happen is that we have an election soon so that the Canadian people can make a judgment on the kind of legislation we will have before us. This Government will not allow it to happen in the House of Commons because it will not allow that kind of debate. All it does every time it brings something in is to hurry it through and then decide right away that we must have closure we must have time allocation. That is because the Government cannot allow the people to debate this because they might understand what it is all about.

I see that my time is up. I hope that the time of this Government is up fairly soon.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, as you said, and rightly so, this is not really a debate on the substance of the Bill before the House, Bill C-144. I am sure Canadians would like to know what this Bill is about. And in fact it is an Act to authorize payments by Canada toward the provision of child care services and to amend the Canada Assistance Plan in consequence thereof.

The debate we are having right now is not, however, about the substance of the Bill but about procedure. This is one more instance, and I see my Quebec colleagues are very interested in the debate, this is one more instance of the Government bringing in a very important Bill and deciding to push it through the House and impose it on Canadians.

This is a very important Bill. This is a Bill that was promised us in 1984, during that great and glorious election campaign. And then all of a sudden, on July 25, 1988, four years later... Is the House to blame? Certainly not! Is the Opposition to blame? Not at all! It's all because one day the Government decided to get out its 1984 election platform and realized, in the process, that... Oh, dearie me! In 1984 we promised them a day care Bill, and we haven't done anything about it. Let's set a bill drafted, good or bad, and use our majority to push it through the House. We have to make sure that in the next election campaign, we can go to Quebec and everywhere else in Canada and say that we fulfilled our election mandate. Well, this is against all the rules of intelligent procedure in this House.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have tried to update the House of Commons and the way we operate. We had this vast parliamentary reform that was supposed to give parliamentary committees enough time to consider a bill and allow them to call witnesses to ensure that Canadians and Quebecers understand what the Bill entails. However, the Government is getting nervous because it realizes that the end is near, and so it says: whether you like it or not, we are going to push this Bill through, whether it is a good Bill or not. As far as I am concerned, it can't be that good, since only four witnesses were heard in three or four days, and none spoke out in favour of the Bill. So why the rush to limit debate?