

Canada Child Care Act

care programs should be flexible. Needs have to be accommodated for those who require care on a variety of schedules. People have strange schedules of work today.

Part-time, full-time, seasonal, shift or on a drop-in basis. Sixth—this is most important and something which the Government does not recognize—services should be non-profit to ensure the maximum, optimum use of public funds. Services should not be devoted to the profit-seeking motive. We should not be seeking to make fast bucks out of the needs of our children. As a Government, the Conservatives have the responsibility to get the optimal value for the taxpayer's dollar. We are not doing that when we fund day care centres that are oriented to profit. Finally, these services should be accountable. There should be regular monitoring and financial accountability provided to parents and to Government.

The witnesses who appeared before the committee were universal in their condemnation of Bill C-144 as failing to meet the real needs of Canada's children and the parents of those children. They were not just negative. They came before the committee and tried to make reasonable suggestions which they hoped the Government would adopt. A number of groups pointed out that more than 200,000 spaces should be targeted by the program which the Bill creates, for instance, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the National Federation of Nurses' Unions, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the Ottawa-Carleton Daycare Association, the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

As I looked through their comments and the comments made by other groups which appeared before the committee, I noticed a lot of the people coming before the committee were from unions. There were day care advocacy groups and a lot of union people appeared, which made a lot of sense to me. These are the people who need child care. Naturally the unions were trying to represent their members' interests. Unfortunately, the Conservative Government was not interested in hearing this.

The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees talked about the principle of national objectives for day care and the need to incorporate the necessary provisions to enforce national standards. The Canadian Jewish Congress on the same subject said that for such a vital program as child care, the Government must establish national programs which set the parameters for provincial programs so that families may be assured of finding services of reasonably comparable quality no matter where they live. This is consistent with the tradition of other national cost shared programs.

The National Anti Poverty Organization recommends the establishment of national objectives at least and some federal standards if possible. We do not have that in Bill C-144. The Alberta Federation of Labour points out that Bill C-144

provides no national goals nor objectives. It says that provincial Governments such as Alberta—and they could speak just as well of the British Columbia Government or a number of regressive Governments across Canada—must clearly understand the obligations of participation in the program. The National Union of Provincial Government Employees said the welfare of children must supersede the jurisdictional sensitivities of provincial Governments.

• (1600)

The witnesses who appeared before the committee had a lot of concern with this Bill. As I said at the beginning, it is shoddy. It is the sort of thing that will not stand up to the light. It is the sort of thing that when it is put in the wash, it is going to fall apart. It is flimsy and not something that we in this Party, caring as we do about Canada's children and the future of Canada, can support.

Ms. Mitchell: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague the same question, really, that I asked the Conservative Member who spoke this morning. Why does the Member think the Conservative Government and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), who promised major action on behalf of Canada's children, and certainly this as a response to Canadian women as well, waited four years? And why did they give such high priority, first of all, to bringing in tax measures which are regressive and which give double the amount of reduction for higher-income families and do nothing for lower-income families? There was very little delay in that part of the strategy. Why does the Member think the Conservative Government is putting a seven-year cap on everything?

The Member tells us his wife has been very active in child care. I am sure he knows it often takes two or three years to get a new child care centre going. In many provinces which are underdeveloped, it will take quite a while before they begin to use this program. At the end of seven years there will be no more capital funds, there will be reduced variable cost sharing for the poorer provinces and the program in effect will be finished. We know that during those seven years, if we are lucky, we will only see 25 per cent of the need met. That is quite a generous estimate at that. It is not nearly the amount of child care that most bodies, including the Day Care Information Centre, says is needed. I would like to ask the Member to comment on the very restrictive type of policy the Conservatives introduced.

Mr. Manly: I would like to begin, Madam Speaker, by telling a story about another country far away from Canada. A Cabinet Minister was visiting an area in his riding in this foreign country. He went into a pre-school situation and he could see it was very inadequate. There were no facilities. They did not have furniture. The children were not properly looked after. The Cabinet Minister regarded the situation for a while and realized it was a bad situation, so he promised \$100 would be made available to help that day care centre. A little later he toured a prison and saw that the facilities were not great, but were not bad as prisons go. The Cabinet Minister looked