

*Canada Child Care Act*

This child care legislation now before you, Mr. Speaker, and before the House is not a plan designed to protect and nurture our children. It is a plan designed to protect and nurture this Conservative Government at the end of its mandate. It is designed to deceive Canadian parents into believing that the Government was serious when it said that it would give our children an adequate child care plan. It is yet another reason in the upcoming election that Canadians are going to replace this Conservative Government with a Liberal Government.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** It will be a Liberal Government which will give Canadian children and Canadian families a child care system of the highest quality, a system which is accessible, which is affordable, and which is available for every family in the country.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to continue the debate on Bill C-144, the Canada Child Care Act. I have particular reason to participate in the debate at this point, having just heard the best arguments of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) against Bill C-144.

I must say, and I think you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that while the Leader of the Opposition was eloquent in his remarks, he did not provide one cogent reason for delaying the passage of Bill C-144, never mind stopping its passage in this House or in the other place through his friends in the Senate. I urge him to instruct his colleagues and his friends in the New Democratic Party to get on with the business of passing this piece of legislation so we can start on the road to accomplishing some of the goals and aims that he outlined.

I have to say that the Leader of the Opposition is new to the matter of child care, and especially new to its priorities in the House of Commons. On March 20, 1987, he made it clear to *The London Free Press* and to the students at the University of Western Ontario that child care did not have a high priority with him or with the Liberal Party. In fact, he said that it would be done responsibly, that it had to be done within the financial capacity of the country to digest it. He said that there were greater needs in national defence, a guaranteed income plan, and tax reform, but that he had first to create a system in which business could flourish, and that that was his Party's greatest concern. The words sound a little hollow in the House of Commons today when they are compared with statements made in the past with respect to child care.

That is partly why I rose to participate in this debate. It was not because of the outlandish comments made by some of the members of the Opposition in the last day's debate wherein the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) made comments which I thought were simply not in accord with the facts relating to child care or the provisions of the legislation before this House of Commons. I also heard the

Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) denigrate this initiative in terms that simply are not supported by the facts and the provisions of the Bill.

What is the purpose of the Bill that we have before us? This is another step along the road to an evolutionary process that has had dramatic changes over the last three decades with respect to the care of children in Canada. I think that some of us in this House are old enough to remember the history of this evolution and the beginning of it.

One only has to go back to the late fifties and early sixties to remember the orphanages that were present across the city centres of Canada, and I speak particularly of the City of Halifax where, in the 1950s, we had organizations such as St. Joseph's Orphanage wherein children were hidden away from public view because their families could not support them or, indeed, they were unable to support them due to their economic problems or for other reasons. It was only in the late sixties, 1968 and on, that there was a dramatic change in this attitude and, in fact, in the City of Halifax—and I was very much proud to be a part of this transition—St. Joseph's Orphanage was phased out and a new kind of institution was created which became known as St. Joseph's Day Care Centre and which is now called St. Joseph's Child Care Centre. For all that period of two decades it has been leading in innovative care for children in Halifax and in other parts of the Province of Nova Scotia. As I say, this was part of an evolutionary process which is ongoing and which is present in Bill C-144.

In dealing with day care I have specific reason to recall 1970 because in that year Nova Scotia passed what I understand at the time to be the first day care legislation in Canada. I was a party to the creation of that Bill, and I am very proud to stand here today and make reference to it. That too was a milestone in the evolutionary history of child care in Canada. I think there were people who denigrated that initiative at the time. In 1970 people said that this was not, enough, that it was going in the wrong direction, or that should try something else.

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Those who lead the way always have to take risks. In being innovative, they always have to put their ideas down on paper and present them to the legislatures, to the Parliaments, and to the public and accept the criticism from those who would delay their actions and divert them from their goals.

Does the Leader of the Opposition and do opposition Members realize that in this very day in Canada the only access to federal funds for child care is through the Canada Assistance Plan? Do they not realize that that plan contains a means test, which excludes most of our married couples from assistance for day care services? Is that what they want? Is that why they would delay and stop passage of this Bill, because they do not want the very medium income families mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition to have access to high standard day care with government assistance? Are they