

*Mothers Allowances*

in this country. Just this afternoon, along with every other member of this house, I received a document from Montreal written in French. It is from two fathers of families—one who, I believe, has four children and the other five—who are concerned with difficulties of family life and who offer as their particular centennial solution a program under which each family would be enabled to have a house all to itself. This pressure of housing is one expression of the way in which our urban life is threatening the family.

Not the least of the pressures on family life now is occasioned by the tremendous industrialization of our country, automation, and the way in which larger and larger numbers of mothers are going outside the home to work. In my opinion every woman should have the right to decide whether she is to work in her own home, outside it, or engage in a combination of the two. Some women today are in a position to exercise that right very much more fully than others. In general I believe it is true to say that most women who engage in business, professional work or in a great many other kinds of work such as educational employment, are unable to afford to employ housekeepers or baby sitters, or to send their children to private nursery schools. When they are in a position to do this I believe there is no real neglect of the family. The woman can go to her work with an easy mind knowing that the children will not be neglected, at least in so far as their material comforts and needs are concerned.

I believe it is always a good thing when a mother of a young family is able to stay home, because I do not regard the work of a mother to be limited only to feeding, clothing and looking after the material needs of the children. Having grown up in a home where a mother devoted her entire energies to her six children and devoted a good deal of her time to inculcating in them personal habits, and particularly habits pertaining to their relations with other people, I believe the work of a mother does not stop with the mere business of keeping her children clean, fed and healthy. I think it goes far beyond that. However, I do not believe a mother is neglecting the family, within the ordinary sense, when she goes out to work when her children are being looked after while she is away.

What about the thousands of mothers of young children who are the sole support of their families? I think of the widows, women who are separated, deserted wives and

divorced women. They all have young children and make up a very large percentage of the women in this country. In addition to the women I have mentioned who are the sole support of their families, what about the mother who must add her pay cheque to that of her husband if the family is to have a modern standard of living? The other day I read an item which appeared in the paper to the effect that in the United States, where conditions are very similar to those in Canada, the women's bureau is greatly concerned about the large number of women who appear on the labour force in the month of September. Esther Peterson, assistant secretary of labor says unequivocally that the increase in the cost of living has in very great measure been responsible for these mothers of young families having to go into the labour market in such large numbers. She is concerned about it, as is the director of the labour bureau of the United States.

What is the choice which faces such women? Really it is a choice between a pay cheque or poverty in the home. It is not a matter of downright starvation, but it is poverty; it is not a modern standard of living. It is one to which she is reluctant to see her children exposed. In cases where the mother must go out to work without proper provision being made for her children, it is the children who get caught in the crunch. I am all in favour of a system of child care centres. I believe this is one of the greatest needs we have in this country, and I have said this in the house on a number of occasions. But, let us face the facts; we do not have any such system at the present time. These great groups of women whom I have mentioned are faced with the choice of either going out to work and leaving their children neglected or staying home and facing a very thin type of life for their families.

A wide sampling was taken recently in the schools of Ottawa. This was done in three different income areas of the city. This sampling brought out the fact that in this capital city of ours one child out of every 1,000 children who is in urgent need of a child care centre can get such care. In Ottawa one child out of every 1,000 who needs child care or nursery care is able to get it. I think this must have a very serious effect on the Canadian family.

We speak of the importance of protecting Canadians against various types of hazard and about the importance of increasing production in order to keep the people of this country well and strong. On the other hand,