

The Address—Ms. Mitchell

provided through education and for health services, although directly to the centres would be a first step toward universal daycare. Surely children should have higher priority than the purchase of new uniforms for a generation of military personnel who have long accepted integration. I find that this kind of absorption with the past instead of with the future may be a symbol of this Tory government, and this concerns me.

The government should take steps to remove abortion from the Criminal Code. The Morgentaler case has already illustrated once again how obsolete this legislation is. It is certainly long past time, and I think public opinion in Canada supports the fact that women should be allowed to make this decision themselves. It is a very personal decision. It should not be something that we as Parliamentarians or the legal system interferes with.

There are many recommendations relating to justice as it affects women, Mr. Speaker. We agree that these Bills, which were Bills largely on the books before the last session ended, should be brought forward, particularly reforms to help with the control of pornography. This is a deep concern to almost everyone in Canada. Also we require a new Divorce Act which would provide protection in terms of the care of children. We also think that early action on the Badgley report regarding child abuse, and on the Abella report is top priority. We are glad to know that the Government will be considering these reports.

● (1540)

Of course Canadian women are very concerned about the whole question of health. We will expect the Government to implement the Canada Health Act as it has promised. I am sure this will be an important and difficult challenge for the new Minister, in view of the fact that undoubtedly he will be battling, despite the intention of co-operation, strong resistance from Conservative provinces in implementing health care provisions.

Also we welcome the mention in the Speech from the Throne that the federal Government will provide assistance to community-based health services. I think this is very important. There are many ways our health dollar could be used more effectively. Certainly one way would be to apply medicare and to develop community health clinics which employ more paraprofessionals, nurses and other health care practitioners. We look forward to hearing more about these proposals in committee.

The most shocking revelation of the new Government is its intention to redesign universal social programs, particularly Old Age Security and family allowance, despite the promise of the Prime Minister that universality was sacrosanct. This will come down very hard on the view of Canadians who expected the Prime Minister to keep his promises. One of the first things he proposes is a review of these programs, with very provocative questions, indicating that they are considering a targeting of programs and the development of a means test approach with benefits only to those with the greatest need. If this happens, it is unlikely to increase programs in that respect.

The document, *A New Direction for Canada*, indicates several possible changes. We hope very much that any debate will involve the people directly affected, as well as Canadians from the middle class who feel very strongly that it is their right to have universal medicare, health services, old age pensions and family allowances. That group pays most heavily for these programs through their tax system and certainly expects to retain some benefits.

Surely it goes without saying that a bank manager earning over \$500,000 per year should be taxed back for old age pensions or family allowances. The Prime Minister raised this point with me in the House the other day. However, let us not be fooled by the suggestion of tax reforms in a Mickey Mouse sort of way. The Prime Minister should have said—and this should have been indicated in the Throne Speech—that Canadians demand major reform in the tax system and that the regressive tax system which allows wealthy people to pay little or no tax at all places the burden of the tax load on middle income Canadians. We believe—and I thought the Prime Minister supported out Leader's position on this during the election campaign—that upper income Canadians should pay a minimum of 20 per cent of their income in tax. If we had this money, we could beef up family allowances for families most in need and we could continue to maintain social programs for middle income Canadians.

I am very concerned that the Tories will follow the Liberal lead. We saw this happening in the six and five program where they really chopped into family allowance programs. Senior citizens vote; they have a very strong block of votes, which every political party knows. Let us face it, kids do not vote. Thus, when governments want to chop something, it is the family allowances and children's programs which are the most in jeopardy. I am concerned that these are the programs which will face the chopper. Of course we will oppose it.

I should like to refer to some excerpts from a statement by the National Council on Welfare in 1983 entitled "Family Allowances For All". In part it read:

We see no compelling reason at the present time to change the family allowance program . . . From an equity point of view, it makes far more sense to cut the regressive children's tax exemption rather than tamper with the progressive family allowance—

Universal family allowances recognize the value our society places on child-rearing. They constitute a modest but significant source of independent income for mothers, especially for those who work full-time in the home; ending universal payment of family allowances would simply widen the economic gap that persists between men and women. By stimulating consumer spending, family allowances help create and sustain employment; more jobs might be lost than gained if funds were diverted from family allowances to direct job creation schemes that provide only temporary work—

The most compelling argument in favour of universal family allowances is the role they play as part of the foundation of Canada's social security system.

It continued:

The abandonment of universal family allowances would threaten other universal programs and, in time, weaken public support for necessary improvements to selective programs designed for those in need. In the end, poor people could lose most from a retreat from universality.