

*Status of Women Study*

I should like to address myself particularly to the approach taken this afternoon to certain recommendations contained in the report on the status of women. The hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), who is the chairman of our caucus, made a very fine survey earlier today on the recommendations of that report and the areas the recommendations covered. I should like to deal particularly with two of these areas. The first area has regard to day-care centres, and the second is the matter of family planning.

The recommendation urging day-care centres was received by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women from one coast to the other. More than any other recommendation it kept cropping up in the submissions of delegations which appeared before the commission. I think there are various basic reasons why this recommendation was so strongly urged. I would like to refer to the three most important reasons.

Day-care service is important, first because it fits in at this particular time when women, whether everyone appreciates it or not, have reached the point in our society where they have a capacity and a desire to become not merely women but fully rounded out individuals. They intend to spend part of their time in the home with their families and part of their time away from home working in the community, just as men have been able to do for a long time. This is the point women have reached, and we might just as well recognize that fact. Women will no longer be satisfied to be given the choice of home and family on the one hand or creative work in the community on the other.

● (8:10 p.m.)

They will say: We will not take one or the other. We will have some of both. That is one reason why day-care centres have been urged as a means of making it possible for women to do this without neglecting their family duties.

In the second place, child-care centres, or day-care centres are urged for the very obvious reason of protecting children and providing the proper place where they may grow and develop under proper supervision with children of their own age. The third reason is that in our society we are realizing that today the family foundations are not as solid as we should like them to be. We know that they will not be too solid on the old basis any more. Our choice today is either laying down family foundations on the new basis, which would be a solid basis, or allowing them to slip and disintegrate.

Today the cold, hard truth is that we have reached that stage in society where child care and the life of the home will no longer be the sole responsibility of the mother or woman: it will be shared with the father and husband and with society. Those are the patterns that are emerging, patterns to which we must pay attention. Therefore, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended that the Parliament of Canada pass a national day-care act which would provide funds for half of the operating costs of child-care centres, or day-care centred as they are now called, 70 per cent of

the building costs for the first seven years and that the provinces shall operate these day-care centres through child-care boards.

The royal commission was well aware of the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan under which if a province wishes to embark on a program of day-care centres it can apply to the federal Department of National Health and Welfare and obtain 50 per cent of the operating costs. The commissioners knew that perfectly well. They also knew that this provision did not go far enough. Therefore, the whole business of capital costs for child-care centres and for renovating older buildings to be used as child-care centres, to say nothing of the provision of new ones, had to be considered in the context of a much broader framework of child care. So they had in mind a federal child-care act under which funds would be provided to the provinces for the measures that I have mentioned. The provincial authorities and, under their aegis, the local authorities, would operate the child-care centres. I use the term "child-care centres" from preference. The commission talked about day-care centres because day-care centres are usually the first step: they provide care for the children of mothers who must work by day. The commission recommends that as a beginning, because the need there is the greatest and because we must begin with day-care centres. Later we can build up the whole framework of child-care centres.

Canada is industrializing quickly. We are told that by the end of the century a large percentage—I have heard the figure of around 80 per cent mentioned—of our people will be living in the three cities of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. So we are beginning to wonder what is to happen to children of mothers who are out working and earning their living. Of the total Canadian labour force, according to figures released about the middle of January this year, 32.6 per cent are women. Of these, 33.1 per cent are single, 57.6 per cent are married and 9.2 per cent are widowed, separated or divorced. According to a Department of Labour estimate, of the women who have been married and who are now in the labour force, 19.1 per cent have children under six years old. Practically 20 per cent, or one-fifth of those women, have children under six years old. That means that there are nearly half a million children—489,000 to be exact—under six years old in this country.

What happens to so many of these children who in many, many cases are the children of working mothers in low-income groups? Not long ago the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) estimated that in Canada more than 900,000 children of working mothers might need day care, but only 9,000 are getting it in day-care centres. This means that we have excluded most children and have exposed them to all the physical dangers that children can be exposed to when they run around without proper supervision. We have exposed them to the dangers of delinquency, maladjustment, alienation, the danger that they will adopt the habits of the drug culture and all the other dangers that children without supervision and proper care encounter. It means, in addition, not only neglected children but overwrought mothers, mothers who have to divide their energies