

*Family Week*

in this respect. It would be a great idea if all the provincial, territorial and national governments would meet and discuss their plans to celebrate the week which I am proposing, without getting into an interminable constitutional debate.

It is rightly said that a society which respects its minorities generally fares better as a democracy. Is the family not the first social minority? Is it not also right to say that a society which neglects to strengthen, to preserve and to institute respect for the first society of all, the family, runs the risk of disappearing? Hon. members surely know the classic historical arguments or interpretations that the civilizations of Athens and Rome disappeared because of the absolute abandonment and erosion of traditional family values that preceded the military battles and defeats although some of their institutions and their own genius were passed on to us through the centuries. I think those arguments are still valid. We have to draw those lessons from history and reflect on them often.

● (1710)

Or again let us consider what happens at home to Canadian native families subject to twentieth century pressures, to the influence of the white man. The situation of native people is a disquieting one for our collective national conscience, and I could give many other examples. As legislators, it seems to me we must always remain aware and concerned with upholding basic values that have made this country a nation respected and a society admired by many other people in the world who envy our position, our resources, our values, our democratic system, and what not. However, that does not shelter us from the gangrene that subtly kills other societies.

And when we stop to examine our own laws, the programs of different governments, we see that the family is not a negligible factor. From the material point of view, family allowances, social welfare benefits, health programs, old age pensions, and so on, address precisely the family situation of Canadians. Those laws and programs are based on family and social considerations. There are also, of course, the courts of justice and the sections of the Criminal Code dealing with the family, sections that are very often controversial, of course, like abortion. Not satisfied with the status quo, the serious and organized research undertaken by the Law Reform Commission is now directing us to the contemporary aspects of family life such as separation, divorce, joint ownership, care of children and respect of life. Of course, the Law Reform Commission deals with the situation of society and the family in evolution and under crisis. That also must be addressed, Mr. Speaker. We must find social and legislative solutions which will be acceptable to and morally accepted by the majority of Canadians while still respecting individual liberties. That is not an easy task but no one has the right to ignore or forget these problems in the hope that they will vanish as a result of sheer inaction.

[Mr. Corbin.]

A great many of us would not be sitting here today if it were not for our personal commitment ever to try to improve the living conditions of the families of our respective constituents, be it with regard to the impact of oil prices on the family budget, of new consumer protection legislation to put an end to loansharking or again of discrimination in the implementation of unemployment insurance for instance. In my opinion, anything else has only secondary importance.

Peanuts, just as potatoes, are an important issue in my constituency, and are subjects which deserve to be addressed. Yet does not the omnipresent family institution require more consideration on the part of all Canadians? Each year on July 1 we celebrate Canada Day. Does the family not deserve more than that. And since planet Earth is the mother of all human beings, to use one of environmentalists' favorite phrases, what would be more logical than having family week coincide with Mother's Day?

I have not said everything, Mr. Speaker, and if it were possible to exhaust the subject in 20 minutes or even an hour, we would not need this bill. However, I hope I have said what was needed to convince my colleagues, to prove the validity of this bill, and I should like to thank in advance those who will choose to support my initiative. I wish to thank in particular the Vanier Institute of the Family, which has provided me with most valuable literature, the research services of the Library of Parliament and, of course, the parliamentary counsel, Mr. Joseph Maingot, for their assistance and their most precious advice. I know that several members want to contribute to this debate and I will listen most carefully to their remarks.

Finally, given the commitment of the government to allow passage of a limited number of private members' bills, a commitment given in its proposals for reform of the Canadian Parliament, I would be grateful to the main speaker from the government side if he could tell us whether they intend to let this bill go through all stages during the present session.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, and with this I will conclude and resume my seat, I want to say that if I were to dedicate this bill, I would offer it as a tribute to all the families from Madawaska-Victoria, whom I represent here, and in particular to the wife and children of the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria who have made and continue to make every sacrifice to enable their favorite MP to pursue his political action in the Canadian Parliament.

[English]

**Mrs. Diane Stratas (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State):** Mr. Speaker, the importance of the family to our social fabric cannot be denied. I should therefore like to thank the hon. member for introducing the family as a topic of discussion in this House with his proposal to establish a family week.

It is so easy to lose sight of priorities these days what with rhetoric and linguistic shilly-shallying by experts and consultants. Bread and butter issues are so often ignored and lost in