

Canada Child Care Act

supply of day-care services, in terms of spaces, the Government is wasting a large proportion of this money just to ensure that seven years from now, only 25 per cent of the spaces required for children whose parents work outside the home will be available.

Madam Speaker, I conclude by pointing out that nearly a million children in Canada live in poverty. We have a problem of poverty in Canada. This problem is in no way solved by Bill C-144 on child care. All who are closely interested in our children's needs, in our families' needs, oppose this Bill from the Conservative Government. So I say to the Conservative Government: Withdraw your Bill. You presented it too late for it to pass before the elections. Propose something really worthwhile for all Canadian families.

[English]

Mrs. Collins: Madam Speaker, despite all the rhetoric at the end of the Member's speech, I think he is talking to a different group of Canadian parents than the parents I have spoken to in the last few months. These are parents who are very happy and supportive of the initiative this Government has taken for the first time to make some very significant advances in the provision of child care services and to allow parents choices. Both the profit and non-profit sectors will be involved in the provision of child care.

I would really like to comment on the fact that both this Member today and his colleague, the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis), spoke last week about the fact that representatives who appeared before the legislative committee oppose this Bill. To set the record straight, in the goodness of the hearts of government Members on that committee, they proposed that the witness who appeared before the committee would be chosen by the Opposition. We gave up our spots and enabled the opposition Parties to choose the witnesses. Naturally they chose witnesses who opposed the Bill.

There were 44 groups that appeared. They represented a cross-section. There were witnesses from British Columbia, from Alberta, from Ontario, and from Québec, and they were groups which had an interest. Most of them would like to have universally available and financed child care, a goal which is just not realistic in terms of the cost to the country at this time. I was not surprised when I heard that those groups were not particularly supportive, but I do not believe they represent the broad interests of Canadian parents, Canadian parents who support this Bill and support this initiative.

I do not find it very surprising that the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy), the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap, and other members of the New Democratic Party are asking the Government to scrap the Bill and are critical of it because they had a relatively small handful of groups and organizations from central Canada which were opposed to the initiative appear before the committee. I remind the New Democratic Party that the early committee, chaired by the now Minister of State for Transport (Mrs. Martin)

went across the country—and many of my colleagues served on that committee—and heard from hundreds of organizations. They were presented with a wide variety of viewpoints and had a lot of support for the kinds of initiatives we have now brought forward.

This legislation is a major step forward and does indeed have the support of the majority of Canadian parents who will benefit.

Mr. Cassidy: Madam Speaker, I want to comment on the intervention of the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mrs. Collins) who represents one of the wealthiest ridings in the country. Perhaps tax breaks assist her constituents, but I would like to point out to her that if there were groups involved with the problems of families, of women and of kids across the country that supported the day care legislation, they have had six weeks or seven weeks to speak out. If the Conservatives agreed that those groups would not appear before the committee, why have those groups not spoken out in other ways? Why have we not been reading about their interventions in *The Globe and Mail* or *The Vancouver Sun*? Why have I not had correspondence from them urging me and members of my Party to support Bill C-144? The groups that have come forward carry a great deal of weight. I notice that the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association was opposed to Bill C-144, as were the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

• (1230)

Does the Hon. Member for Capilano suggest that those groups have no credibility on this particular issue at all? Does she think that on day care we should be listening only to the Business Council on National Issues, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, or the Citizens' Coalition in London with its right wing views? Is this whom we should be listening to, or should we in fact be listening to women?

The Labour Congress, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the National Federation of Nurses' Unions, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the Ottawa-Carleton Day Care Association, the teachers, and many other groups oppose this legislation.

The Hon. Member for Capilano speaks of the initiatives taken by her Government and suggests that those have aided families. Does she mean the deindexing of the family allowance, the deindexing of the child tax credit, the increase in taxes on average families of more than \$1,000 since 1984 while taxes on rich people were reduced to aid people in her constituency? Does she mean the deindexing of the child tax credit? Are these the measures of which she is so proud? Let her defend those during the election campaign.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the exchange about the committee. I wonder if we could have an explanation of why, if the Conservatives wanted to bring people forward to the committee, to support their Bill, they limited the committee hearings to only two and a half days.