

Canada Child Care Act

\$2 per day for a child who goes to day care after school or for half days. According to the capital grants system recommended by the New Democratic Party, \$1,500 would be provided for a handicapped child, \$1,000 for a pre-schooler, \$500 for a school age child and \$500 for a child in home day-care.

What bothers us a little is that the budget for the first year would provide \$247 million in operating grants and \$21 million in capital grants.

If the average operating grant is \$4 per day and the average capital grant is \$1,000, the budget for the first year would subsidize 237,000 licensed spaces and create only 21,000 new spaces.

In March of this year, we had 243,545 licensed day care spaces in this country, of which 153,159 were spaces in non-profit day care or home day care. Between March 1986 and March 1987, the number of licensed spaces increased by 23,000, and the number of spaces in non-profit day care and home day care increased by 12,334 spaces.

If the budget for the first year is maintained in constant dollars for five years, by the end of 1992 only 105,000 new spaces in non-profit day care would be created under the NDP plan.

My question for the Hon. Member is this: If, as his Party claims, we urgently need 1.8 million additional licensed day care spaces, why does the New Democratic Party plan to fill only 1.2 per cent of this requirement during the first year of its program?

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the serious question by the Hon. Member. She outlined some areas that I did not have a chance to pursue.

Of course one of our top priorities would be to improve the wages for care givers, the people employed in child care facilities who provide the support systems for children. They are presently grossly underpaid. I think the average industrial wage in Canada today is about \$14,000 a year and the average child care worker makes at least 30 per cent less than that. In the commercial venture, child care for profit venture, which I personally do not support in principle, the pay is even less. That is a situation which we must improve quickly.

Obviously the kind of facilities that are run by communities and non-profit organizations are the best because parents play a direct role in the kind of care being given to their children. They do not have much say in a commercial or profit oriented venture because the reason that child care centre exists is to make money, not necessarily to care for children, while that is obviously a by-product of that initiative.

Community based, co-operative or non-profit organizations are ones in which the parents set the criteria for the curriculum and schedules. That is the kind of child care I think we want to see in this country.

The Hon. Member has raised an interesting question and one that I look forward to discussing, particularly in the upcoming election campaign. It is the legitimate question of how we pay for all of this. Where does the money come from?

The people of Canada will have an interesting opportunity to make some choices. If the people of Canada really want nuclear powered attack hunter submarines that will cost billions of dollars, then they should vote for the Conservatives because that is one of their high priorities. If they want decent child care facilities, they should vote for the New Democrats because that will be on the top of our priority list.

The people of Canada will have a choice to make, and that is what elections are all about. Do they want nuclear submarines or child care facilities? Do you want a variety and comprehensive set of child care opportunities for your children or do you want a fleet of nuclear attack hunter submarines on our east and west coasts? That is the choice. Those are the choices Canadians will have to make. If they want the nuclear fleet for Canada, they should vote for the Conservative Member in that constituency. If they want decent child care on the corner, a decent after-school care facility for their children, or a resource centre for families with spouses who remain at home to raise their children but want to have better books and toys, vote for the New Democrats. That is what elections and politics are all about. I look forward, as I suppose many of us do, to getting out in the election campaign and giving those choices to the people, to let the people decide.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, during the Hon. Member's speech I interjected a point to which I want his reaction. He was criticizing the Government for reducing the indexing and in some cases eliminating the indexing on taxation and some social benefit programs. Did the Hon. Member watch the Ronald Reagan event at the Republic Convention in the last few days? The President of the United States, a very Conservative President who, in some ways, is an extreme right-winger, took great pride in the fact that he introduced indexing into the taxation system in the United States, copying an idea that was brought into the Canadian system by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) when he was Minister of Finance many years ago. Is the Hon. Member aware that that right-winger, Ronald Reagan, is less harsh on the poor and ordinary citizens in his country than the Government has been toward poor and middle-income Canadians?

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to that interjection by my hon. friend. I suppose there are only two pages from the Ronald Reagan book that I would like to apply to Canada. One is the imposition of a minimum corporate tax that I believe was another progressive item which the President and others have mentioned at the Republican Convention.