

Private Members' Business

I spoke in the House on a couple of occasions on the subject of the incidence of teen pregnancies in our country. Canadians will know, for instance, that President Clinton of the United States said during his state of the union address that there was an epidemic of teen pregnancies in the United States.

• (1745)

Canada is not insulated from these occurrences. As I reported to the House last year, over 20,000 women between the ages of 12 and 19 gave birth to children out of wedlock. They decided to raise their children. Most of them have not finished school and for the most part become dependent on subsidized housing and welfare. Their offspring are at higher risk of being premature or low birth weight. They are more likely to experience difficulty in school. Their children are more likely to become single parents. It certainly is an indication of some of the things that are happening in society.

Canadians should know that the rate of youth crime has increased 35 per cent since 1986 and 46 per cent of cases in court are repeat offenders. With these kinds of results Canadians should ask whether we are a contributing factor to that social behaviour.

I must ask a rhetorical question. What has become of the traditional family? Is it really up to governments to take responsibility for the future development of our children? Who would dare say that a stay at home parent caring for preschool children does not work?

Back in 1961, 65 per cent of families with preschool children had one parent in the home. Thirty years later in 1991 the number had reduced to 12 per cent. Some would say this is an attempt somehow to suggest that women should stay at home and have children. The old cliché may be that a woman's place is in the home, but the new reality is that the woman's place is where she wants to be. Seventy per cent of preschool children are now in non-parental care arrangements on a regular basis while their parents work.

We do have working poor. Many second income parents are earning in the range of \$20,000 to \$30,000. After child care expenses and the costs of employment their take home pay is so small many are asking why they are doing it, why they are doing it to their families.

In 1971 a Decima poll indicated that 70 per cent of working women would stay home or choose to provide direct parental care if they could. That was updated recently by the Angus Reid organization in June 1994. It reported that 68 per cent felt that the best way to raise children was with one parent at work and one at home.

Back in October I introduced private member's bill C-256, the purpose of which was to allow the splitting of income between parents, to allow them to free up jobs, to create child care spaces and to provide the choice to parents who were asking: "My net take home pay is so small why am I doing this?" The issue was not to compel behaviour but rather to allow

the behaviour to flow naturally based on strong social and family values.

Governments do not raise children; people do. The government must take notice that the family is very fragile and vulnerable. It needs the government's support to ensure that our children, who are our future, will be able to achieve their full potential in the best country in the world.

Good people do not have to do bad things to create a bad society. They just have to stop doing good things and the bad will quickly fill the void. An investment today in our children is the best investment that we can make for the future of all Canadians.

• (1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, who could not agree with the motion introduced by the hon. member for Mississauga South? The only question we can ask ourselves is why did the government not include this proposal, which had already been introduced in the form of a bill, in its annual budget review? Why did the government leave this out of the budget, since the aim of the motion is to recognize the contribution of the stay-at-home spouse in families who choose to take care of their children at home instead of sending them to day care so that both parents can work?

I do not think that anyone could be against providing equal treatment in the tax system for parents who want to stay at home and take care of their children. I repeat that it is quite surprising that the government did not already include such a measure in this year's budget.

But, when we reflect on the issue, it becomes quite obvious that this is part of the government's logic. A government that reneges on its promises regarding the child care services and the day care spots it was to offer Quebecers and Canadians is not interested in offering this kind of equality to spouses.

Let us be clear, however. In supporting this kind of motion we are not saying necessarily that we wish to promote the traditional family model. A family in which children can be raised the traditional way and receive all the education and training and in which you can participate is great, of course. But other types of families can be just as great and we must ensure that they have an equal opportunity to give their children a good education, have access to adequate daycare and can make the choices that they consider the best under the circumstances.

I think that the motion before us gives us food for thought concerning a basic element of our society, children, as well as the way they are raised, the tools they need and how we will let them develop in our society. What the hon. member is trying to do is to encourage the government, first with a bill and now with this motion—and I can only commend him for his tenacity—to allow parents to make a choice, with respect to child care, based not strictly on financial considerations, but rather on educational considerations. It would also allow either parent to stay at home to raise the children and instill in them the values that they deem appropriate. Parents could make this choice without