

*Marriage and Family Life*

tant than family life, indeed Bill C-70 seemed to contradict this when there was no agreement on the part of the Government to withdraw the Bill which will reduce the value of family allowance. However, I will put that aside because that is not the debate for this evening.

I believe it is very important that we discuss the whole question of family life and the reasons for family breakdown and divorce. I and my Party also share the Hon. Member's concern about the very high incidence of family breakdown with the stress and unhappiness of the couples that occurs, not to mention the unhappiness that often happens to the children as well.

I know the Hon. Member is very serious about this issue, however I think there are many more questions we must consider besides that of a communications program which would be targeted to expounding the value of marriage and family life and perhaps deal with it in a somewhat superficial way. I am not saying that I am opposed to this idea but I am suggesting that the cause of family breakdown is much deeper and must have more significant remedies.

● (1720)

I now understand, after hearing the Hon. Member speak, that one of his motives for proposing this Bill was to put forward the positive side of family life. We talked much about divorce and the very high incidence of family breakdown when we were debating Bill C-48 and Bill C-49, certainly, the increase in divorce and the desperate situation in which women and children find themselves. We had statistic after statistic showing how much harder it is in economic and social terms on women who are left alone with children.

I think we should look at the many factors which contribute to family stress, the things which happen before a family breakdown. We must look at ways to strengthen families. To do that we must in a very realistic way look at the new type of families in our society. We have a very rapidly changing society where many of the values and taboos which my generation grew up with have changed, and we must open our minds and attitudes to the different values of younger people today. Many of us, perhaps, yearn for the traditional family we see quoted so often in StatsCan; two parents, the man working and the woman looking after two children, one boy and one girl. We know that in reality the norm for Canadian families today is that the two parents work. When we talk about families, we have to include single parent families. Just because there is only one parent raising a family, it does not mean, as we used to believe, that it is a so-called "problem family". I strongly commend many single parents, both mothers and fathers, who are doing a wonderful job of raising children on their own.

We must also look at blended families. We are seeing many remarriages and families coming together in different kinds of arrangements in which, I am sure, there are many stresses involved. We must certainly look at two working parents in most families. I think we must also look at extended families. In my riding, there are many families who come from Asia, and it is the grandparents who take on a lot of the child care

while the two parents work. The aunts and uncles as well often work to try to pay off the mortgage and everyone lives together in one home. We also have communal families where young people choose to live together. So let us keep our minds open when we think of the supports which are needed for families.

There is no question but that there are many serious stresses and family problems. We know that 40 per cent of Canadian marriages end in divorce and single families are the fastest growing type of family. I mentioned the other day that there has been a 50 per cent increase in single parent families over the period between 1971 and 1981.

Another very serious family situation which we have not recognized and are not doing enough research on is the increasing incidence of adolescent pregnancies. It is a tragedy when young teenage girls become pregnant and decide to keep their children. In fact, we have children raising children. One wonders about the life of the new child and what kind of maturity he or she will gain when the mother has no chance to become an adult in the real sense of the word herself. A recent article in the *Toronto Star* stated that 40,000 teenagers in Canada become pregnant each year, which translates into one pregnant teenager in 11. I want to come back to this subject and talk about a TV program which could be targeted to this group.

We are seeing today many changes in attitude toward marriage. Customs have changed. The whole question of legalizing marriages is something else which is quite different and trial marriages are fairly common. Perhaps, for many people, that is the way to go, although my generation is not used to this custom. Fortunately, young people are no longer under so many taboos and must make their own decisions. However, I am sure all of us would agree that where children are involved, a very secure situation with loving parents certainly is very important.

We need to look at the reasons for marital breakdowns and family problems and at the kind of community support and Government funded programs which will help to ease stress and prevent family breakdown. There is no question that unemployment and underemployment causes stress in many families when the father, who has been the traditional worker, reaches the age of 30 or 40 years and finds himself out of work. There is a tremendous impact on how he feels about himself. This creates stress along with, of course, the family not having enough money. The lack of job security is, I am sure, a major contributor to family stress.

We see many women who have to work and who want to work but who are working at a low rate of pay. They are being forced into part-time jobs and do not have adequate child care. We have a very damaging child care situation where people are forced very often to use babysitters.

Many families are living in poverty or in near poverty conditions. What does this do to a marriage? I would like to quote the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mr. McLean) who said in his briefing notes to the Conservative caucus, and I quote: