

Adjournment Debate

ment of Canada has been alluding to its profound concerns for those individuals who are seeking new child care spaces as well as for those who are care givers.

In 1984 the government promised an action program with regard to child care. That promise was reiterated in throne speeches in 1985 and 1986. It was promised again during the 1988 federal campaign and shortly thereafter it was reiterated in the throne speech that followed.

At every opportunity which the Government of Canada has had to do something with regard to child care, it has elected in good faith, in good conscience, to do absolutely nothing.

I know that members opposite will stand in their places and come up with the phoney excuse that they are studying the matter. They state that they are not certain which way they should go in providing the necessary services for which Canadians from coast to coast have been asking. They talk about tax credits. But members opposite know that they are not the most effective measures to be used in creating new child care spaces.

They know that these various tax measures do not provide each and every Canadian who has children and who wishes to avail themselves of that particular tax credit that they cannot do so.

It does very little for the poor Canadian who cannot provide or does not earn sufficient income in order to take advantage of the tax provisions as indicated by the Government of Canada.

Of course the other argument that they use is this. "We can provide child care through the auspices of the Canada Assistance Plan". What a wonderful neo-Conservative way of addressing the situation.

• (1805)

A province like Newfoundland would have to come up with 50 cents on the dollar for the creation of a child care space. I suggest, with respect, that it, as well as my own province of Nova Scotia, not to mention New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and, indeed, other provinces do not have the financial wherewithal to create the necessary spaces for child care.

The argument that there are numerous opportunities under the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan just

does not hold water, in my view, nor does it give a real opportunity for us to create new child care spaces.

I know the parliamentary secretary agrees with that. I hope that when she stands in her place she will tell us in more detail to what the government at least hopes to do before the next federal election, other than make hollow promises to Canadians who are in desperate need.

I want to conclude with some remarks and observations which are key and germane to any national child care program, namely, quality child care. If we want to have high quality child care in this country, yes, one has to create spaces, that is very true. But one must also have care givers who are equipped with knowledge, know-how and skills and who are compensated accordingly for providing that child care. In my view, we do not need new buildings on a grandiose scale to provide necessary child care. But we need new spaces, new accommodations, alternate accommodations and we need people as care givers receiving good compensation.

I believe the Government of Canada has fallen down in that regard by not providing leadership and by not providing programs, whether it is under the basis of Community Futures or a whole host of programs which are available to the Government of Canada.

I hope that the parliamentary secretary will stand in her place today and provide some real and meaningful hope to those thousands of Canadians who are care givers and wish to continue to give care to young children, as well as to parents who are absolutely beside themselves at the lack of action by the government in regard to initiating any new child care programs.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, the national child care strategy which had been unveiled in 1987 stemmed from a commitment to establish a genuine national child care program.

It is rather ironic in any event— When the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond takes the floor to speak to this issue he gives me yet another opportunity to remind him that two major pieces of government legislation were stalled in the Senate, the first being the national child care strategy. We would not be talking about it now because the national strategy