

*Canada Child Care Act*

earlier, and I will take her word for that. The Canada Assistance Plan has served Canadians well. It has permitted the provinces to submit a bill, so to speak, to the federal Government for any social measures they undertake, and to be refunded 50 per cent for every dollar spent in social services and programs.

This is why at the present time we have child care services in existence throughout Canada which are made possible under the Canada Assistance Plan. We have \$1.9 billion for child care systems—a substantial sum—that is spent annually.

This Bill and the speeches made in this House by the Government tend to create an impression that we are launching a totally new program and a totally new expenditure which has not existed until now. That is not so. That program of child care has existed under the Canada Assistance Plan, and will continue to exist, as the Parliamentary Secretary clarified earlier, if provinces decide not to enter into an agreement under Bill C-144 with Ottawa.

This policy was indicated quite lucidly by Marjorie Nichols in a column a month and a half ago. She wrote that the Government would be spending, assuming an inflation factor of 5 per cent a year, some \$17 billion over the next seven years without this new program.

By adopting this program, the Government will be spending—and you have to include the inflation factor—some \$22 billion over the next seven years. That is perhaps one way of putting into perspective the comparison with the program that exists right now under the Canada Assistance Plan, and it puts Bill C-144 in perspective as well. The increase is in essence 4 per cent more per year than would have been spent without this new program.

The matter of national standards is one that has been bounced back and forth across the floor in debates, in second reading today and particularly in the reply by the Parliamentary Secretary. Her analysis was quite interesting, and I recognize that. The fact remains that we want to ensure in Canada some basic minimum standards across the board, regardless of where the child attends the child care system. The standards have usually been a prerogative, and the leadership, up until now, has been given by the federal Government.

In this Bill, we do not find any reference to a pattern that has been established through other social security programs and systems. This is why the criticism has come from this side of the House. If we have missed a reference to national standards in Bill C-144, I will be glad to hear from the Parliamentary Secretary when I sit down. Perhaps she will be in a position to refer me to that clause in the Bill that establishes national standards. I will be glad to be corrected.

● (1650)

Another shortcoming of this particular measure and approach is that it does not set priorities for families in need. It

is our understanding, from the hearings in committee, and after having listened to submission after submission, that families in need will face a more difficult situation than they have up until now.

In the question and answer period we dealt briefly with the question of the latchkey kids. The Parliamentary Secretary has referred the matter to the provincial authorities and this would be in their domain to designate and to take care of. We hope the contract, the negotiations, and the agreements that will be signed will give latchkey kids the just recognition as a phenomenon in society that has to be dealt with.

In this debate there has been very little reference, except for a couple of times, to the salaries paid to day care workers. They will continue to be the lowest paid in society, unless the federal Government gives some leadership on this matter, and unless it speaks openly and gives a clear indication as to what it thinks should be the appropriate and adequate payment to be given to those key individuals in our society.

On the question of priorities, to which I made a brief reference earlier, we should begin to examine the reference of the Prime Minister to the question of the time bomb of a deficit, and the manner in which the Government commits itself in defence equipment budgeting—although it is true that it is over more than seven years. In some cases it is five years. For some items and equipment it is seven years, in some cases it is ten years, and some cases it is over ten years. Nevertheless, when one looks at the totality of the defence equipment budget, one finds this astonishing \$25 billion commitment which the Prime Minister does not find it necessary to worry about in terms of a deficit. Then one compares the \$25 billion to the \$4 billion, because in essence we are talking of a \$4 billion expenditure on child care, that is the real amount, without including the tax credits. One asks, what on earth are the priorities of this Government? One wonders deeply and profoundly about what are the driving set of values that the Government is adopting when those priorities are compared. On the one hand we have \$25 billion versus \$4 billion.

We are looking forward to the debates not only here, but also on the hustings to stress and underline to Canadians the type of priorities that the Government has when it comes to the question of the care of children over the next seven years. It does not make sense to go into this type of funding when it is not looked at in isolation any longer, because it cannot and should not be, but when one looks at the type of funding in relation to competitive, parallel, and concurrent fundings of this Government, then the whole program becomes a shameless exercise in the pornography of power. It is a bad scene that emerges. In other words, if we can find the money for defence equipment, we better find the money for the proper care of the present young generation.

In Toronto the waiting list is 4,700. The other day, a young woman named Roberta Wilson, aged 19, went into the office of the chairman of the Metro Toronto government, Mr. Flynn, and had a sit-in for two hours until she was given a day care