

country has allocated to much of the problems of Canada's children.

This is not to be just heart-wrenching. We can wrench a lot of tears from people by telling sad stories, but I think that we in this House have a duty and obligation to try to do something about this.

• (1740)

This motion attempts that beginning, that a bill of rights be established, that children do have a place, do have a voice, will have some protection through a child protection commissioner, and that an emergency hot line be established. Rather than just nice words strung together in this House, we need something tangible to come out of this.

I would like to turn now to the international aspects of that. In my critic area of international development and in my role on the subcommittee on international debt of external affairs, we hear much about structural adjustment and the kind of effects that structural adjustment has on the developing world. International debt is a major crisis and yet the people in the corporate board rooms of the banks do not seem to understand that the decisions that are made in those boardrooms have an effect on the most disadvantaged in the world, particularly the women and children. The heaviest burden of the debt crisis is falling on the growing minds and bodies of children.

This motion to support a bill of rights that my hon. colleague has put forth would indicate Canada as an example. We are willing to do something in our country and we care about the children internationally.

We also have to indicate that structural adjustment does not just occur in the Third World where certain policies are taken in order to address a particular debt problem. We now have in our own country a debt crisis that has evolved over the years. Now those same politically powerless people are the ones who are paying the major burden of that debt through cuts to social programs and the things that are going on with health care. We have to understand what structural adjustment is. It is two nice words put together and yet it has very negative consequences for children here and internationally.

We are coming up in the next week to a budget. We are all waiting on tenterhooks to learn where the cuts are

going to come. We have been told by the finance minister that there are going to be major cuts. We can only hope that some of those cuts will come in defence spending. We have heard a lot about the peace dividend and what will happen with the peace dividend, that the money that will be hopefully reduced from defence spending will be allocated to social programs.

I caution you, Mr. Speaker, that it be not just social programs here. We seem to have achieved a global consciousness environmentally and yet we have not yet achieved that global consciousness socially or politically. We cannot see those things as mutually distinct. We are all on this planet together and we are interdependent, not just environmentally but socially and politically. What happens in Columbia, El Salvador and the Sudan has an impact on our lives. We are talking about political destabilization, a growing militarization in the face of that destabilization. The statistics of the resources that are allocated to the military are shocking.

Developed countries on average now spend 5.4 per cent of their gross national product for military purposes. Canada only spends .43 per cent on overseas development assistance. In the Third World three in five governments spend more on their military than they do on health care. It is a shocking statistic when you realize that the cost of three hours of arms spending would pay for the entire World Health Organization \$260 million annual budget. We talk about what we value in our society and about children as our treasure, and not just a national treasure but an international treasure. I think that these statistics put the lie to that.

We have to do a major reassessment of our values and a reallocation of our resources if we are going to really address the situation of children, and not just in Canada which this bill of rights would do. This bill of rights for children, this commissioner for child protection and an emergency hot line would be an important symbol that Canada does care for its own children, that we value our children and that our whole community values reflect that.

In conclusion, I want to urge the government and the members of the Liberal party to support this motion unanimously.

Mrs. Louise Feltham (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address this motion on the advisability of a comprehensive bill of rights for children which would standardize laws throughout the country and which