

Private Members' Business

The second element of the motion refers to a means test. We have a number of social programs that are subject to a clawback or the so-called means test. The guaranteed income supplement is subject to a means test. Old aged security is subject to a means test. Once the income of the individual recipient exceeds \$53,215 there is a clawback at a rate of 15 per cent.

Unemployment insurance benefits paid by the Government of Canada are also subject to a means test which is 30 per cent of the social benefit paid or the lesser of that or 30 per cent of the excess over a threshold of income.

The child tax benefit is available to all Canadians at \$1,020 per child. There are some additional amounts for the third child and also some other amounts with regard to whether or not one has claimed a child care expense deduction. That also is clawed back depending on the level of family income. The means test is directed to ensure those benefits are available to those in most need.

The old age exemption under our present tax act, pursuant to the last budget, is now subject to a means test. For taxpayers who are eligible for that exemption and have income over \$25,921, there is also a gradual clawback. Canadians will have no objection to making deductions fair for all, particularly when they are focused primarily to those in legitimate need.

Having dealt with the tax issue, I want to spend the majority of my time dealing with the big issue, the family, and specifically the importance of early parental care.

I want to refer to the Ontario premier's council on health and well-being and social justice: "Critical development outcomes are rooted in early experience and influences. These outcomes include good physical health, the ability to learn, the ability to cope with stress, being able to relate with others and to have a positive self-esteem. A secure attachment to a nurturing adult is essential and who better than one of the parents to provide that care".

• (1740)

Recently Dr. Robert Evans published a book called *The Determinants of Health*. In it he related the results of a 19 year study in the U.S. The study looked at the implications of good child care in the first three to five years. Just to give an example, he showed that those that had good quality parental care in those early years had a 50 per cent lower incidence of mental problems; 40 per cent fewer went on welfare and 50 per cent fewer teen pregnancies in the group that had quality child care.

I also look to the United States and a book called *Children First* by Dr. Penelope Leach. She writes that children have become of secondary importance in our society and concludes that our priorities must shift. Her primary conclusion and recommendation are that parents must put the interests of their children ahead of their own.

Looking to the Canadian position, Dr. Don Ogston, director general of social development and education of Human Resources Development Canada wrote in January 1995: "It is undeniable that the early years are critical for the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children. Clearly the quality of care children receive during these years is of paramount importance".

Looking further for more recent research, I turned to the University of Calgary and a study done in 1994 by Violato and Russell. I want the House to know that this research has been characterized by some as bogus. However, I welcome that kind of reaction because it means we are getting close to changing the view that Canadians may have with regard to direct parental care.

This study was called a meta analysis of published research of all studies conducted on this matter throughout the world on this subject since 1957. Non-parental care was analysed for any influence on child bonding to parents, social-emotional development, behavioural adjustment and cognitive development. The results in this study was that: "Non-parental care for more than 20 hours per week has an unmistakably negative effect on the social-emotional development, behavioural adjustment and childhood bonding. A minor negative influence was found in the cognitive realm".

They also found that the day care quality, the family structure, the age of entry into the child care and the socioeconomic status were found to be negligible influence factors.

Follow-up research on this was conducted by Dr. Mark Genuis, the executive director of the National Foundation of Family Research and Education. In 1994 at the University of Alberta in his doctoral dissertation called "Long term implications of insecure attachment in childhood" his study looked at the impact of non-parental care on the security of child bonding with parents.

The results of the study showed that insecure bonding to parents prior to age 10 is a direct cause of emotional and behavioural problems in adolescence as well as on youth crime. Regular non-parental care prior to age five was a significant predictor of insecure attachment. The place and the caregiver made no difference to the conclusions reached. The deciding factor influencing the security of bonding to parents was the regular separation from those parents, not the place or the type of care when separation occurred.

This kind of research flies in the face of some of the traditional thinking and the conventional wisdom we have been hearing all these years. It has struck a nerve. However it is an important observation that these studies have raised the debate to a new level to take into account the realities of our society.