

The Family

about this because recommendations of this nature might be construed as a sign of permissiveness on our part.

On the contrary, I suggest we would show that we do assume our responsibilities and that we must encourage young people to continue their studies, give them means, day-care and support services so they will be able to keep their children. But then we must also provide them with whatever is necessary to make it possible for them to become self-supporting just so they will be in a position to bring up those children.

● (1740)

[English]

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon. It provides me with an opportunity to reaffirm my support for the Canadian family and its importance in society. It also provides Hon. Members with an opportunity to reflect upon the role which Governments have played in the past and will play in the future. It is an important opportunity for those of us in the House.

I have a plaque in my home of which I often think. I should like to paraphrase what it says. Essentially it indicates that if an individual is right within himself, there will be some harmony in his home. If there is harmony in the home, that harmony will continue out into the community, extend across the nation, and ultimately affect the entire world. I often think of it because it reaffirms the importance of the base unit we are discussing today.

As Members of Parliament we must consider the significance of families and their role in society. Also we must consider the impact of families upon the nation. There has been a tendency for some time for us to take the family unit for granted. As a result we have often neglected it by not proposing legislation which could be of assistance, or by simply ignoring it and some of the problems surrounding it.

The debate today has been indicative of the problems we face. All Members of Parliament have examples in their constituencies of problems and stresses experienced by families. I refer to wife battery and its impact upon communities. I can think of the impact it has had upon families in communities and towns in my area. One frustration I have experienced as a Member of Parliament is that in some communities there are now homes to which women can come with their children for security and protection. However, there has been no support for men, support in the sense of counselling or helping them address a serious problem which is hurting the family unit.

I am certainly pleased to be involved in this debate. I do not want to take up too much time because I should like to see the House of Commons reach a decision this afternoon. It is important for Governments to provide leadership based upon a clear understanding of the problems and the kinds of threats faced by families. Governments should look toward solutions to help alleviate the problems. They should not divert them

momentarily or side-step them or come up with band-aid solutions. It is important for us to be involved in informed discussions.

I am also pleased with the amendment offered by my colleague to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare. I certainly support it because committee stage would provide us with an opportunity for discussion and informed debate. It would also provide us with an opportunity to draw upon the arguments and concerns demonstrated this afternoon. Hopefully the committee would consider looking at the experiences of various families throughout Canada which have dealt with frustrations and problems. It should look at the solutions they have come forward with and the activities in which they have involved themselves.

I should like to refer to an example which I think speaks well of what we are trying to accomplish—some families in Vancouver with the common problem of dealing with disabled family members. Often they were told that there was no choice but to institutionalize their children. Of course it was a real frustration for them. It did not seem to matter which way they turned. The common piece of advice they received from the bureaucracy providing the service was: "We are the experts. We know how to handle the situation. The only solution is to institutionalize your children". The parents began to say: "Wait a minute. We have a right to be involved in the process. We have a contribution to make. We have some decisions we would like to see taken". They formed a society called Community Living Society and began to lobby to try to improve their particular situation. With a fair amount of effort they were able to obtain funding from the Province of British Columbia, which further enhanced their ability to do something. The net result was that they were able to start providing services and facilities and take into their own hands the resolution of a problem which had caused all of them so much hardship. That is the kind of leadership we want to look to. It speaks well of the kind of potential Canadians have.

● (1750)

As well, their experience was the subject of a film produced by the Department of National Health and Welfare. It is available to the Canadian public and we can now sit down and see their struggles firsthand, and how they overcame their problems. We can then begin to realize how isolated we have become from the difficulties people face on a daily basis.

I know other Members wish to speak on this matter so I will not take up any more time of the House, other than to say I am very pleased that this motion has given us the opportunity to reflect on a problem fundamental to our society. We have had the opportunity to stop and think about what we as Members of Parliament can do to address the problems faced by a most significant part of our society. I am pleased to see the motion and indicate my support for the amendment, as well as the main motion put forward by the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse).