

Statements by Ministers

said: available to children of parents who work outside the home, or to children whose parents work at home.

In his statement the Minister implied that there is no consensus in Canada on the question of day care services. Well, I am not sure that there is no consensus on that question.

According to a poll made public last April most Canadians believe that day care services should be the shared responsibility of Governments and families, but others think that the Governments should not have anything to do with such services.

The same poll revealed that 50 per cent of the Progressive Conservative Members believe that the federal Government should not get involved in that field.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister will be able to make them change their mind.

I am expected to state our position on matters of principle, Mr. Speaker, but since I am not familiar with the task force mandate I can say it is true that the needs of families have changed a lot. It is also true that the families themselves have changed a lot.

Mr. Speaker, if indeed the task force will seek to determine the responsibilities of families, communities as well as those of the private and public sectors, may I simply point out that the responsibilities of companies will have to be wider than those they have been given by the Progressive Conservative Government in terms of employment equity.

The Progressive Conservative Government has emphasized the voluntary approach in matters of employment equity. However, I want to warn the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) that men and women who are concerned about the problem of child care will not be satisfied with a voluntary approach.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Government is fond of consultation, but it tends to listen to social groups only when their opinion coincides with the Government's.

We have seen what happened to de-indexation of family allowances and the prostitution Bill. Although the majority of the witnesses spoke out against the Bill, the Conservative Government had no hesitation in adopting it.

As for this public consultation, I can only hope that the Minister of National Health and Welfare will take the broad view and that the Government will really listen to what the parties concerned with this sector have to say. I would like the Government to launch an advertising campaign that would accurately reflect the Minister's desire to have many Canadians participate in this exercise. Without their participation, I believe we will just have a useless task force, lacking any real contact with families who have to deal with child care problems.

I also want to say I think it is too bad Katie Cooke's recommendations have yet to be released. It seems as though the Conservative Government is cleverly setting up a task force on

child care because it does not want to implement the Cooke report's many recommendations.

We realize that a study, commission or task force is an excellent way to procrastinate and buy time, especially when, as in the present situation, the results of a task force like Katie Cooke's must be released and the last thing the Government wants to do is to act on its recommendations. So it just orders another study.

I would also like to draw the attention of the House to several recommendations made by the Subcommittee on Equality Rights. A number of the report's recommendations concern day care centres. So the question arises why another task force is being set up, since the recommendations are already there.

Mr. Speaker, this criticism should be understood in the context of the activities of the Conservative Government. Since September 1984, one can hardly say that issues concerning the status of women have been a priority.

I think this is obvious, considering that a year has elapsed between the announcement that a child care task force would be created and its actual creation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Minister of National Health and Welfare that this kind of delay is no longer acceptable and that from now on, action will have to follow hard on the heels of a statement of intent.

Finally, I would like to know when the committee will take up its duties.

• (1540)

[English]

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I wish to clear up what may well be a misunderstanding. I thought I heard the Hon. Member for Outremont (Mrs. Pépin) indicate that she had not seen the terms of reference. I want to make clear, at least in my case, that the draft terms of reference were provided to us, and I thought to both Parties, about a week ago. It could well be that there has been a communications problem. I just do not want to leave the wrong impression in the presentation which is being made. However, I do want to say a word or two about the setting up of the task force.

I am sure that all Members of the House will recall that in August of 1984 the then Leaders of the three political Parties, being in somewhat different positions but nevertheless Leaders of the three political Parties, met in debate. This was a debate which was sponsored by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. In that debate they were asked the following question:

What steps would you take to ensure that quality universally-accessible child care is available in Canada?

My Leader responded as follows:

Day care is a social responsibility like medicare and education and should be available to all. There must be an increase in the number of day care spaces to