

Canada Child Care Act

there are problems with this piece of legislation that existed at the time of second reading that have plagued us throughout the committee hearings and the listening to witnesses. In some cases witnesses reinforced those sentiments relating to complexities and problems which are still with us at third reading.

The fact of the matter is that in launching this Bill and this measure, the Government is badly underestimating the number of mothers, fathers and children who will require the care that this Bill intends to offer. There are many more women in training, many more women at university, many more women entering the employment force than the 200,000 spaces would imply, in the case that they have children over the next seven years. It is an established fact that in cities such as Metro Toronto today the waiting lists are such that they will make the relevance and the significance of this program outdated. In other words, the figures that have been produced at the committee stage and the forecasts indicate that the need out there in order to be met would require a program that is seven times as large as the one that we are debating through this particular legislative measure.

The forecasts are for some 1.4 million children who will require assistance over the next seven years. We are therefore dealing with a limited number of spaces and with waiting lists that are not going to be addressed or assisted by this measure alone.

In other words, the federal Government is not going to cope with the extent of the problem that we have before us no matter how many reassurances the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) may give in this Chamber. Bypassing this legislation we will have dealt with the surface of the problem. We will have dealt so to speak with the tip of the iceberg, but we will not have dealt with the substance of the issue that must be resolved if we are to meet the requirements of a generation that in increasing numbers requires the services of child care.

We see every morning on the subway in Metro Toronto young mothers in particular board trains as early as 6.30 in the morning to take their children to the other end of the city because that is the only place they may have found for leaving their child in care, sometimes 40, 45 and even 60 minutes distance, a place that may be private or public but which consumes an enormous amount of time twice a day, particularly at the end of the day when both mother and child re-enter home after a long day. In other words, the situation is unacceptable in a modern society with the resources that we have in Canada and with the fine record that we had up to 1984 in meeting the social needs of Canadians across the nation.

• (1640)

When the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) spoke in this House on this Bill, he indicated that this Bill can only go so far to placate feelings. He made a reference to the deficit as being

a time bomb. I thought that that intervention was inappropriate and extremely out of place in such a discussion.

We have to keep in mind that the deficit is a time bomb when it comes to an important social measure like this, but we do not have to worry about the deficit as a time bomb when it comes to the development of tarsands in mega projects in certain parts of Canada which are going to absorb billions of dollars. We are not to worry about the deficit being a time bomb when it comes to the defence equipment and Budgets over the next 10 or 15 or 20 years, but we are to worry about the deficit as a time bomb when it comes to child care in Canada. That makes me wonder about the values and the priorities of the Progressive Conservative Government. How can it worry about a deficit being a time bomb in relation to certain social measures, but not worry about the deficit being a time bomb when it comes to measures other than social? That, for the life of me, I cannot understand. The Government is to be condemned for these upside down priorities and values. I will come to that, at the end of my intervention, with specific figures, because they really trouble me.

Third, the point also needs to be made that there is an increasing dependence on the part of Canadians on adequate child care services, because Canadians need to have two incomes in order to build a family. Keep in mind that in the last four years the tax imposed on a person earning \$25,000 a year has gone up by 22 per cent. That is a considerable burden. Add to that the fact that we have seen the deindexation of family allowances during the past four years introduced and implemented by this Government.

In addition, we have had the deindexation of the child tax credit. As a result, three measures will hit at the same time the person in the process of raising a young family.

Then there is the point which I made earlier, that the Bill and the expenditures that will go with it will only be able to meet the requirements of one-seventh of the child population that is predicted for over the next seven years.

In the case of Ontario, the province I come from, the adoption of this measure will mean that a ceiling will be imposed in Ontario to the extent that it will result in 12,000 less child care spaces than if it were to continue under the present regime. That is a matter of profound concern with the provincial authorities and Government.

There are certain incentives to enter into this agreement, but there are also certain penalties that will result in signing this agreement on child care. Probably the major disincentive and penalty is that by entering this agreement and abandoning the Canada Assistance Plan, which has served us well over the last 20 years, Ontario and, I suppose, other provinces will lose a substantial number of spaces, which, in the case of Ontario, has been estimated at 12,000.

I ask why the Canada Assistance Plan has to be abandoned. The Parliamentary Secretary dealt with that in her answers