

*Government Orders*

However, we are not doing it. We are not doing it because of the stereotypical, preconceived attitudes that have existed in this country for some time. We are not doing it because we do not want to change. We want to tinker with the system a little but we really do not want to change it.

We are not changing it even though many women, because of the low maintenance and low support they receive for themselves and their children, have to supplement their income. Two-thirds of the women who receive alimony and child support are raising their children by themselves.

They are left with this very important—I do not want to say difficult because difficult is not the word, although raising a family is not easy today. Important is the best word because they are raising and moulding the citizens who will be in charge of this country tomorrow.

In that there is this important role, this important and meaningful procedure and this important and meaningful task ahead. We all should be supporting these women, these partners of broken marriages who are looking after our children.

What is the reality? The reality is that the majority of Canadian child support orders are in arrears. The majority are in arrears. Most mother-led post-divorce families live in poverty. That is over 50 per cent. This would still be the case even if all payments were made. That remark comes from no source less than the Department of Justice. The reason that even if all maintenance payments were made over 50 per cent of the mother-led post-divorce families live in poverty because the support payments are ridiculously low. Two-thirds live in poverty. That is, with payments being made two-thirds live in poverty. If the payments are not made, 75 per cent of mother-children households would live in poverty.

• (1400)

The Ontario government, as the parliamentary secretary has said, has taken over the collection of support payments in the province of Ontario. I join with him in congratulating it on that. This is important because the stalling and the deflection that has gone on in enforcing these payments has been totally tragic. It has been a national tragedy in Canada. But even with the full support of the Government of Ontario, and I think it is

sincere in this, in that province 75 per cent of maintenance orders are in arrears. Goodness knows what the situation would be if it was not supporting them.

Research by Miriam Grassby published in May 1991 in *Reports of Family Law* shows that the average support awarded is considerably less than half of the actual cost of raising a child.

Therefore, in a family where maintenance payments are received, less than half of the needs of the child in that mother-led family are met by the support payments. That is just for the necessities. That is absolutely no money for the mother for leisure activities or for any kind of retirement package. That is unheard of. There is no retirement package, nothing that could be put aside. Just forget about that completely. The mother is supposed to completely forget about any kind of recreation, any kind of free time, any kind of pleasure or leisure activities or any kind of money put aside for retirement or whatever.

The case seems to be that it is hard to deny your children if you are living with them, but it is easy if you are not. I am not condemning the former husbands. This is not an easy situation. This is not cut and dried. When there is a divorce and a breakup of the family, there is a tremendous amount of animosity.

Sometimes the mother is resentful and if she has custody of the children she does not want the father to have access. If the father does have access, or the court says the father is to have access, she may throw roadblocks in the father's way. The father may be well-meaning at the beginning but because of the frustration and aggravation of trying to see the children he finally says he is not going to go through the hassle and is not going to bother trying to gain access to the children.

That is one way of doing it. That is understandable, with the degree of aggravation, but that is not fulfilling the role for the children. You may dislike your former wife intensely but the fact of the matter is the children are so very important. We cannot just look at the animosity that exists between two adults who are not putting the welfare of the children first and foremost, or one who is and one who is not, it does not matter which one. I do not want to get into that kind of an appraisal this afternoon.