

*Canada Child Care Act*

● (1750)

I am not sure whether he is aware that when we had witnesses at the legislative committee two things happened. First, Conservative Members insisted that it be only for two days, and there was hardly any notice to get in touch with people from the different regions in order for them to come. The second thing that the Conservative Members insisted on was a limited budget for travel. It meant that even if one or two people from his province, or from my province on the other side of the country, heard about this option, they still did not know whether or not they were going to receive payment for travel expenses to come.

As a result, we did not have one single witness from the Province of Nova Scotia, from P.E.I., from New Brunswick, from Newfoundland, from the Northwest Territories, from the Yukon, or from Saskatchewan. We only had one witness from British Columbia, one from Alberta, and one from Manitoba. The rest were all either national groups or from central Canada. Every one of them, of course, opposed the Bill.

Does the Member think that the kind of process imposed on this committee, which is now being imposed on this House whereby Members from all regions are not able to be heard is grossly unfair and undemocratic? Certainly witnesses from all regions did not have a chance to appear before committee. He knows very well, I am sure, that the situation is very different in his province than it is in other provinces and that we should be hearing from regions on this Bill.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member raises a very valid point in terms of the process that has been put in place for debate on this particular subject matter.

Not only was the process expedited to suit the political agenda of the Government of the day, but in doing so it has not only affronted, in my view, the regions of Canada, but it has also denied itself the opportunity to make concrete and substantive amendments in the name of the Government to the Bill, if it would have heard a wide variety of individuals and groups across Canada.

I have read with considerable interest about those who have appeared, but there are a number of individuals who would have liked to have had the opportunity to come before a public hearing and share with Members of Parliament the human face and the human tragedy that they are confronted with.

The Hon. Member's question is indeed very valid, but what is not valid is for the Government of Canada, in exercising its political agenda, to short-change Canadians of all walks of life. We may have had some individuals who would have come before us to speak in favour of the Bill. There was one or two, I think, that would have come from the United States to support this Bill, but it would have been equally important to hear those individual Canadians and other groups from across Canada express their views.

I do not know why government Members on that particular committee refused to share in the suggestion being made by my hon. colleague.

**Mr. Crosby:** Mr. Speaker, on question or comment, I would like to make a comment on both the speech made by the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) and the previous speaker from Kamloops—Shuswap. They both made comments which I think are totally unacceptable. In the case of the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis), he said that Bill C-144 contributes nothing to child care in Canada and that we would be better off without the Bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I must stress to the Hon. Member that he should only comment on the speech of the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond. The Hon. Member for Halifax West.

**Mr. Crosby:** It is pretty hard to tell these people apart, because they get up in the House of Commons and just go on with unjustified criticism after unjustified criticism. I merely want to make mention of the fact that child care in Canada is a continuing thing. They perhaps do not know this. They do not remember the days of orphanages and when children were carted away and placed in institutions. It took a long time to evolve to this point before the Parliament of Canada, where we have a valid child care legislation. In Nova Scotia and in British Columbia, what we had 20 years ago—and through the last 15 years of Liberal administration—was orphanages. Children were put away. We are trying to break out of this situation to try something new.

What has evolved is day care centres, institutions for child care, and we are trying to advance this. I cannot believe that people would say that this is not a good thing to do and that we should do nothing. I cannot believe that people do not understand the federal-provincial relationship and the responsibility of the provinces versus the responsibility of the federal Government in this area.

I say to my colleague from Cape Breton—East Richmond, does he not understand the role of the provinces in this field? Does he take away from the Province of Nova Scotia the right to run child care institutions? Is that what he is saying? Does he want the Government of Canada to enforce on the Province of Nova Scotia and all other provinces of Canada its view of child care? Is that what he wants?

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member can rock and roll and he can do the limbo. He can do any kind of dance that he wants, but the fact of the matter remains—and he knows it, from the representatives that have gone to him—that this particular Bill C-144 is a mere abrogation of the responsibilities of Members of Parliament to children across Canada.