

The Family

Canadian network of leading competent people who could in turn train others and promote the creation of services.

The Department's Health Services and Promotion Branch accomplished considerable work to develop collective strategies concerning programs designed to strengthen the family's strong points. Thanks to both extramural research programs, the essential financial assistance has been provided and measures to support the family have been assessed.

In the last few years, the National Clearinghouse of Family Violence succeeded in raising in all sectors a record level of interest about the problem of violence against women and children. As for the National Day Care Information Centre, it helped keep up to date the information base and the necessary specialized councils to promote the development and growth of day-care services in Canada. Of course there is room for more work and co-operation in that field as in others and there are opportunities to implement new means to co-operate with associations which will enhance the efforts of the Government, professionals, the volunteer sector and the public.

Despite a freedom to choose other lifestyles, many people in our society recognize the benefits and values that family life embodies. Therefore, we must ensure that our programs follow the movement initiated in order to support the family. We must also examine as rigorously as possible the resources we put to work to support marriage and family life are used.

I do not think a lengthy debate is necessary to determine our needs; we know what they all are, to some extent.

What the Government cannot and must not do directly could however be done with its help by numerous other organizations of the social system. We will then have developed a strong and permanent framework for the survival and well-being of the family.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, for me, the family is the backbone of our society and the Government must continue to act to support that institution.

I would like to move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Beauharnois—Salabery (Mr. Hudon):

That the motion be amended by striking out the words "in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of sponsoring, with the provinces, a communications program" and substituting the following therefor: "the Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare be empowered to study the feasibility of a federal-provincial communications program,".

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg), seconded by Mr. Hudon, moves the following amendment: That the motion be amended by striking out the words "in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of sponsoring, with the provinces, a communications program" and substituting the following therefor: "the Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare be empowered to study the feasibility of a federal-provincial communications program,".

The debate is on the amendment.

The Hon. Member for Outremont (Mrs. Pépin).

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Madam Speaker, I am quite prepared to support a proposal or an amendment of this kind. However, I want to be sure—and I have been listening to my colleagues—that when we talk about the family, we do not forget the issue of unmarried mothers and teenage pregnancies.

Today, one of our major problems in Canada is teenage pregnancies. The percentage is very high, and it seems not much or at least very little is being done to help these young mothers.

In a number of provinces in Canada, especially in certain regions, and I heard this when I was travelling with the Commission on Day Care, it seems that when these teenagers who may be 14, 15 or 16 become pregnant, their parents turn them out of the house. They go on welfare, they have to drop out of school and often they keep their children. The children are taken in by the family, often unemployed or on welfare. The young mother cannot find work, and if she does, it is usually poorly paid, and in many cases this means another generation of Canadians will be living on welfare.

We spent a lot of time discussing the possibility of giving parenting courses to these single mothers.

I also think these young people should be taught contraception. Every time the word contraception is mentioned, people blush or otherwise react. Everybody is dead set against adding this particular item to the program because they say it is being permissive. When we see children of 14 and 15 get pregnant, have children and then fail to give them an education, I think that when, first of all, they are not given a chance to finish high school and second, they are given no information at all about contraception, it may not be permissive, but it is just encouraging them to get pregnant and have a second and a third child that in turn will be dependent on Government assistance.

So if we are to have one of these communications programs, I hope we will be able to talk about the traditional family, the single-parent family, violence, support services such as day care, and that we might also talk a lot about single mothers and teenager pregnancies. Indeed the Government has to get involved and create a special program for these young mothers, first and foremost to help them avoid having more children out of wedlock, at least not when they are still teenagers. We do need a prevention program.

So I would hope such an education program might be included so as to enable single mothers to continue their secondary education, perhaps in general and vocational colleges, and then that they have access to sexual education programs.

I hope this recommendation will be considered and integrated into the program. Nobody can skate around this issue, especially when we know that 19 per cent of all childbirths in one of the Atlantic provinces last year involved teenagers. Whenever we want to raise this problem in committee everybody is embarrassed and they all say: We should not talk