

Oral Questions

I would like to ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare, whose mandate it is to defend all children, why he would create a situation where he is pitting abused and hungry children against children who legitimately need safe child care across this country? Why is he pitting child against child?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I have to make a choice, because in our society, children are faced with situations like that.

Of course children need day care, but as the hon. member said herself, there are children who are exposed to sexual abuse and family violence. A two and a half year old child was killed the other night in Montreal, for no reason at all.

When a minister of health has choices to make, Canadians want him to have the courage to make them. I believe my cabinet colleagues fully support my contention, and I would hope the hon. member and all members of this House do so as well, that we must find ways, as soon as possible, to help children who are suffering in Canada for no good reason at all.

Ms. Sheila Coppins (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, listening to the polls does not take any courage.

I may refer the minister, who went on at length about what he wanted to do for children, to page 92 of his cabinet colleague's budget. If his government is doing so much for children, why will it to cut \$1.5 billion in equalization payments next year, the very payments which affect the health and education of our children? Why is it making those cuts and why is it not defending its policy?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, equalization payments to the provinces have grown by 60 per cent since this government came into office, from \$5.4 billion in 1984-85 to \$8.5 billion in 1992-93, and it will grow to \$9.2 billion in 1993-94.

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

This Conservative government introduced the surtax in 1986 and raised it twice following that. All told it has raised taxes 33 times. How can this Minister of Finance look Canadians in the eye and tell them that they are

better off in 1992 and that he is saving them with a \$2 tax break? It is absolutely insulting.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we have had to increase taxes is to pay for the burden of debt inherited from our Liberal predecessors. Prior to 1984, prior to our taking office, the Liberal government of that day was spending \$1.33 for every dollar's worth of revenue it was taking in. That could not be sustained. That had to be changed.

We had to start paying down the deficit. We had to start reducing the deficit and we had to start dealing with the burden of debt. That is exactly what we have been doing.

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, this government is not intent on saving Canadians. At 11 per cent in the polls it is merely trying to save itself. Canadians are still taxed to death and no amount of sleight of hand or rhetoric can change that fact.

Why has the minister not made some meaningful and realistic changes that would help Canadians make ends meet?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that Canadians are overtaxed. We are doing everything in our power to reduce taxes. We are reducing government spending. We are reducing taxes and we are reducing the deficit.

For the information of the hon. member, with the impact of the child benefit package and the impact of the reduction in the surtax in 1993, a single parent with two children making \$50,000 a year will have a benefit of \$394; a two-earner family with two children will have a benefit of \$240; and a single earner family with two children will have a saving of \$280. I think that is very important. That will help provide clothing and put food on the table.

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CHILD CARE

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Over and over again this government mouths platitudes about the equality of women and its commitment to the equality of women. The minister knows full well that child care is the vehicle that would allow poor