

parent relationship develops and the vital association or partnership of both parents in the education and care of children.

Because it is interested in promoting qualified support services, the Government also wants to prevent marriage breakdowns. The increasing number of centres across Canada is an alternative to the adversarial approach too often used in dealing with the issue of divorce and the care of children. Couples considering divorce may avail themselves of the services of a mediator who will help them mitigate the negative impact and frustrations often associated with that decision, and find the best formula for the care and protection of children, and also for parental visits.

In every undertaking of governments and non-government groups alike, the vital question is not the means, because it is both necessary and desirable that there be a diversity of frameworks and services. The capital issue is the message. Are we to assume that a single message or a single set of values will meet the needs of a population with such a varied mosaic of cultures, life experiences and family contacts as we have in Canada? I do not think so. The Government might assume responsibility for emphasizing the value of marriage and family life, or again it could be the numerous non-government bodies already existing. Where does the responsibility lie? A considerable amount of care and sensitivity will have to be exercised if Canadian families are to feel understood, appreciated and encouraged.

A study of Canadian teenagers conducted this year points to the existence of an interesting paradox in the way they view the family. For many teenagers, family will be losing its influence in the future; on the other hand they have—and this is food for thought—high aspirations and expectancies as to their own roles in establishing a family and fulfilling its needs. Essentially, this is a very positive sign, because our youth always have been a strong factor for change and social progress. The forthcoming generation of families perhaps will tap that tremendous source of energy, giving a new meaning and vigour to family life.

Mrs. Monique Landry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, this Government sees the family as the very foundation of our society. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights describes the family as a natural and basic element of our society. As such, it provides the best possible milieu for the moral, social and personal development of future generations.

Last year, in the Speech from the Throne, the Government strongly emphasized measures aimed at supporting and strengthening families in Canada. In doing so, we realized that the needs of families today differ considerably from the needs of past generations. The twentieth century has seen changes in all segments of our society. Like all other institutions, the family has undergone a profound transformation.

Marriage and Family Life

Many still see the family in traditional terms, that is, the father as the sole breadwinner and the mother staying at home to raise the children. In 1961, that was still the case in about two-thirds of Canadian families. Today, however, scarcely twenty-five years later, the situation is quite different: only 29 per cent of Canadian families live on the husband's salary alone. This radical change in the manner of earning the family income reflects other changes that are now affecting the social and economic structures of our country. It reflects the fact that for a great many families, two incomes are an economic necessity. In fact, statistics for 1982 show that if women did not work outside the home, 62 per cent more families would be living below the poverty line. The economic reality has brought about one of the major social upheavals in our history, and I am referring to the massive influx of married women on the labour market in the last twenty years.

Mr. Speaker, the role of the woman in the family has, by necessity, changed drastically. Unfortunately, our provisions for social assistance have not kept pace with this development. As a Government, we have a duty to help Canadian society, and Canadian women in particular, to adjust to new realities. The statistics give us a clear picture of these new realities. They show that in 1984, 59 per cent of Canadian mothers with children under sixteen were part of the labour force. Fifteen years ago, only 20 per cent of this group was seeking gainful employment.

Among these statistics, the most revealing are probably those on the number of working mothers with young children. Today, more than half of all women with children under three years of age have paying jobs. This situation clearly shows how important it is to provide assistance to working parents.

Another aspect that must be considered, and that is related to the former, is the changes in the very structure of the Canadian family. Much has been written about the disappearance of the extended family and the fact that parents can no longer depend on relatives to look after their young children, but that is not the only consequence of the so-called nuclear family. It is a fact, families are smaller these days. Couples have children later in life, they have fewer, or they even choose not to have any. This demographic regression has a significant impact on almost all aspects of this country's socio-economic planning.

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In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, two main factors prompt women not to have more children or even not to have any. The first one relates to what I said earlier, namely that a great many couples find it necessary to have two incomes to meet the needs of their family. Many Canadians cannot even consider the income loss associated with maternity and the need to stop working to raise children. That is the reason why women's groups have formed a common front with thousands of