

*Child Abuse*

tion which will perform both functions effectively; (f) particular attention must be paid to the role of police forces—this is one glaring omission in the American literature which is available at this time, and I suspect it has its roots in the particular position into which the police forces in that country have been forced, as well as the traditional antipathy between law enforcement and social work; (g) the final main task will be to put all the pieces together.

This will be a truly massive undertaking, but one which must be tackled in co-ordination by all the agencies concerned.

What role can the Department of the Solicitor General play in this matter? First we should realize that our interest is from the viewpoint of law enforcement. Child abuse is a criminal offence and we are very much concerned because of the extensive commitment of the RCMP. Second, it seems apparent that the incarceration of child abusers is not the answer. The approach has to be one of diversion, one in which we are taking an active interest and in which we probably have as much expertise as any other agency in Canada. Third, it seems that a nationally co-ordinated mandatory reporting system will be required. The RCMP seems to be one of the very few agencies in Canada with the expertise to provide such a service.

What can we do to assist in the development of appropriate approaches to child abuse? We should recognize, first of all, that the main source of funding and expertise will have to come from other departments, and probably from other levels of government. I think the role of my own department would be limited to that of providing expertise on such subjects as the police, record-keeping and the dissemination of information, as well as in facilitating communication and consultation between the agencies, levels of government and individuals concerned with the problem.

Finally, by playing a leadership role, and encouraging study and discussion of the problem, particularly in the federal government, and by the formation of inter-governmental, multi-disciplinary task forces, we will be able to develop new approaches to the problem.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that I support the hon. member's motion and I would like to see it passed by the House before the end of the hour.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie) for having introduced such a motion and congratulate him for the way he stood up for it, because I realize that this motion will be passed and I agree.

I am more particularly pleased because I listened carefully a while ago to the speech of the Solicitor General and I am happy to see that he also agrees. He has in a way laid down the line of conduct on which the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs may base its proceedings.

We have found that unfortunately, even if we live in a highly civilized country, there are still people who batter

[Mr. Allmand.]

children in one way or another. I think that ways must be found to protect those children.

As the father of an average family of ten children, I think I can understand the motion of the hon. member, and this is why, together with my colleagues, I must use every possible means to prevent situations similar to that we were made aware of not a very long time ago when a child was confined in a closet. Neighbours called the police because of the nauseating smell which was emanating from the dwelling.

Such situations should not occur in civilized countries such as ours, and I feel that this is a good motion which should be adopted. The committee set up to examine these cases and others of child abuse or negligence may recommend the necessary proposals for the corrective means to prevent similar incidents from occurring again in the future.

**Mr. Serge Joyal (Maisonneuve-Rosemont):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me an opportunity to take part in the debate and my first words will be to assure my colleague who took the initiative of presenting the motion of my whole support.

I should like to make a few comments supplementary to the statement of the Solicitor General of Canada (Mr. Allmand). As we know, Madam Speaker, the public is now and then made aware of cases of child abuse, either because cases are brought to court or still because some professional groups take the initiative of organizing symposiums on the matter. The last one we have been able to attend was the one held by the Criminology Institute of the University of Montreal and the Association of Women Graduates of the University of Montreal, on October 21 last. At that symposium, a brief was presented redefining the overall context of the problem we are discussing today. Previous speakers, mentioned the difficulty of determining the incidence of child abuse in our country each year.

Now, Claire Dutrisac, an editor for *La Presse*, wrote this in the issue of October 24, 1974, and I quote:

In Quebec alone there are 1,800 abused children each year, children who are ill treated, beaten, underfed, dehydrated. In Montreal alone, there are 750 such children.

This demonstrates, Madam Speaker, how widespread this problem is. Another editor for a newspaper, the *Montreal-Matin*, said the following in the October 26, 1974 issue, and I quote:

Every day, children aged from 2 months to 10 years are mutilated by parents who lie when a physician confronts them with their brutality and who evoke their privileges as parents in order to escape a justice which is inoperative in the case of these children.

Madam Speaker, the time has come for the government in co-operation with all hon. members to review all legislation in that field. I not not agree fully with the commissioners of the Canadian Conference on the Standardization of Legislation who broached the subject in August 1969 and concluded, having terminated their work, that one of the solutions lies in furthering the education of the public. Not that I maintain, Madam Speaker, that we should not do so, among other things, but I trust it will not be the sole means resorted to.

The government of the province of Quebec tabled a tentative Bill of Rights, which now carries the number 50