

I have pointed out in the House and in other places time and time again that the deduction currently provided is totally inadequate. In no way can it reflect the actual costs of maintaining a child. Do not forget, Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for people to say that the wife or the husband should stay in the home and look after the child. Certainly that is the ideal situation and one that we would all like to see in every Canadian home, but in many cases economics make it impossible. Beyond that, there is also the element of free choice that is involved. It simply comes down to the fact that, in this day and age, many women and many men do not wish to stay in the home to assist in providing child care on a full-time basis. They prefer to seek and to pursue careers. We cannot in the House, or in any other legislature, interfere with that freedom of choice, namely, the right to pursue a person's interest in the way he or she wants. Whether the reason is economic or whether it is simply a matter of choice, many people are not in a position to care for children in the home in the traditional way. It is not sufficient, even if it is the opinion of some—it is not mine—to condemn such persons because at the same time you have to recognize that the real concern is the child.

We are providing these facilities and we are constructing these programs, not to benefit in all cases the parent or the person responsible for caring for the child, but to ensure that the child has the benefit of proper care. Whatever philosophy you apply to the situation, you are left with the practical fact that there are great numbers of children in Canada who are not cared for in the home. The only way that they can be properly cared for is in a daycare centre, with the appropriate facilities to provide the proper services.

As I have indicated, and it is worth underlining, all this costs money. The hon. member for Vaudreuil mentioned the Canada Assistance Plan and the kind of social services that are available under that plan. As I understand it, and I am not up to date on the matter, the Canada Assistance Plan does permit provinces to assist persons in the financing of daycare as one of the services to which the Canada Assistance Plan can be applied. I know that in my province of Nova Scotia the Canada Assistance Plan has been used for this purpose. Formulae and methods have been established for assistance to people who use daycare facilities. Again, as we have all seen, costs escalate time and time again to the point where even the relatively small portion of the cost that may be required to be borne by the parents becomes too great a financial burden. I know from my own experience in St. Joseph's Day Care Centre that once we constructed the formula and put it into operation that many people whose income levels exceeded those at which assistance was available could not, in fact, pay the amounts required to maintain the child in the daycare centre. Again, if a person's financial ability is not properly assessed, with the result that a person presumed to have sufficient funds but cannot maintain a child in daycare facilities, the child is the one who suffers. It is not enough to examine the circumstances of the parent and determine that in your view or in the view of the legislature they can maintain a child in a daycare facility if, in fact, they believe they cannot,

### *Daycare*

because the child is left in circumstances which are not conducive to the social wellbeing and mental health of the child.

Child care is the problem area. Our concern ought to be and should be for the care of children, and think of nothing else; if we reject the concept that people are entitled in certain circumstances to help or assistance, and the idea of maintaining children in places other than the home with care provided by parents of the child, we will still have to face the problem of children who are not receiving adequate care.

That problem exists in Canada as it does throughout the world. As it happens, daycare centres have been a very successful method of dealing with that problem. As I have said, they are the modern version of the orphanage; they represent tremendous improvements on the concept of maintaining a child in an orphanage. It is not that many of the orphanages established in Canada and elsewhere did not do an excellent job of caring for children, but we now know that it is most important for a child to be placed in a situation as close to normal as possible. An institution like an orphanage is not the kind of place that will allow a child to develop in the normal way, developing his or her own capabilities and capacities.

With the rising costs and the strain of finances on single parents and many working parents, we have to consider what the role is of government and what provision must be made to ensure that the children of those parents receive care.

I think by bringing this matter before the House, the hon. member at least calls to public attention the fact that these problems exist, that there are methods for dealing with them and that there may be a role for government to play in providing the facilities and the services required by Canadian children.

Let me again just refer to the fact that we have included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms a special provision for women. I want to underline again the association of daycare with the women's rights movement. If we are not prepared as a government, and if we are not prepared as a legislating body to ensure that women can maintain their traditional role as parents and as the persons primarily responsible for the provision of child care—in some cases it is the single working mother who is the only person who bears that responsibility—and at the same time pursue a career which allows them to maintain financial independence, then we are not serious about women's rights. That is a matter that ought to be recognized and underlined; the granting of these rights is meaningless unless we are prepared and willing to provide the support programs, like daycare, that give real effect to those rights.

**Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak today not only about daycare but about Canada's children in general and the very urgent need for major action on behalf of all levels of government for children. I would also like to congratulate the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert), and I share what I think is his underlying philosophy that we must have good