

*The Family*

poverty because there is no economic recognition for the contributions they have made. That too is a scandal in society. I wonder what kind of advertisement it is for marriage and the family when people who have devoted themselves to supporting the family are living in poverty as a result of society's lack of gratitude for the important work they have done.

● (1720)

One in 10 Canadian wives is beaten by her partner, either her husband or her common-law spouse. What kind of advertisement for marriage and the family is it when a family cannot even be a place of safety for one out of 10 women, an astonishing proportion? Certainly this is a problem we must address. Marriage and the family must be places of refuge, strength and satisfaction for people. Certainly male roles must change. We must get at the one in 10 Canadian husbands who considers it appropriate to beat his spouse. There must be non-violent resolutions of family disputes. These are issues that we must address.

Current portrayals of the family on television do not help. Of course, there is a great deal of violence on television and there is a great deal of trivialization of violence. In particular, American programming is more violent than Canadian programming or programming that comes from other countries. It trivializes violence by showing that there are no important consequences, when of course real pain and long-term psychological scars emerge from being beaten or being the victim of other violent acts. The television programming we now have is not very favourable to family life and is not a very good advertisement for marriage and the family. I think the Hon. Member's proposals in this regard are very well taken.

Let us look for a few moments at the family as it is portrayed on television. Very often it is the traditional family that is seen. The male is the bread-winner and the female is the parent at home full time with the children. Usually the family is richer than average. The problems of a typical Canadian family in making ends meet and having both parents working in order to pay a mortgage are not shown on television. Reality is not a very important theme. People do not see real problems portrayed on the screen. They see highly glamorized and very rich families, and they see families with some quite astonishing problems surrounded by a great deal of violence. I do not think any of this helps develop a healthy family life in Canada.

Thanks to the pressures women are putting on the CRTC and Parliament, women are increasingly being portrayed in other family roles on television. This is a refreshing change, because when watching television 10 years ago one would not have thought that women held jobs as economists, Parliamentarians and scientists, or that they did anything else but look after the family. One would have thought that their roles were confined to the family, and that of course was quite an inaccurate reflection of the roles of Canadian women and indeed the roles of women in any other country.

There has been greater realism in the portrayal of women's roles on television. However, I must say that there has been no corresponding change in the portrayal of men's roles on television. We still see the traditional male who does not have much responsibility in the family and whose role is outside the family. If we want to encourage Canadian fathers and husbands to play an important role in the family, to be involved with their children, to share in child care tasks and to have the joy of being with their children, we need not look to television because it does not help in that respect. Television still flogs the old example of a highly divided family with the wife full time at home and the husband full time outside the home. It does not show that many families are trying to meld these roles. Of course, it would be desirable to make it possible for parents to share these tasks. It would be desirable for both parents to have a shorter work week so they could share in the child care tasks within the family. We cannot change the roles of women without changing the roles of men. That must be true in how men and women are portrayed on television as well. There has been a slight improvement in the portrayal of women, but men are still portrayed in a very traditional way.

Of course, the trivialization of violence on television is not helping at all. REAL Women have protested that we do not see enough traditional women on television. I would like to quarrel with that argument in one respect. Statistically, it does not hold up. In fact, we do not see very many women on television at all, but we still see a disproportionate number of traditional women. I think REAL Women do have a point and this is a point that has been made by feminists for many years. That is that women in traditional roles have been denigrated on television.

Think of all the advertising that shows women in domestic roles looking, quite frankly, like idiots. Women are portrayed as being inordinately concerned with pleasing their husbands by shining up their homes. This obsession with cleanliness is one which no normal Canadian homemaker has ever had. No one believes that this is the way to success and happiness. These advertisements portray the stupidity of women in their deference to male experts who tell them how to clean their houses. These are roles which have been the mainstay of advertising over the years and, although there have been some improvements, this denigrates the role of the traditional woman and the role of all women. I think we must all complain about that. It is certainly not a very good advertisement for marriage and the family to show these roles in such unflattering terms.

If we accept that the problems I have enumerated are real problems for the Canadian family, we have to look at some solutions. Unfortunately, when we begin to look at solutions we see that they will cost money. The violent television programs that do not help promote family life are imported at a relatively cheap cost. They are mass produced and production costs have already been absorbed. They are for sale for retransmission in Canada at very cheap rates relative to production costs in Canada. It is expensive to create new material in Canada