

Income Tax Act

strongly believe in families and the values of family life. We must have supports of many kinds to assist families.

● (1620)

I confess that it is a little hard to swallow some of the rhetoric that was in the Speech from the Throne. It is hard to hear Conservative Members extolling the importance of families while they deindexed the family allowance and refused to reindex it. If they really believed in families, that was one of the most tangible things they could have done. It would really not cost that much. We have given them several ideas for how they could pay for it.

Second, as I said earlier, Conservative Members could show their real confidence in families by increasing the child tax credit substantially, by making it apply to working poor and average families and by having it completely indexed as well.

I think that this piecemeal approach really shows that what we need is a sound, comprehensive family policy in Canada. We do not have such a thing. No Government has brought one in. We are struggling with these concepts in the Special Committee on Child Care. While it is fairly narrow in its approach, I think it has given us some indications of things that should be part of a comprehensive family policy in addition to family benefits.

I hope that the Government will make substantial contributions toward improving accessible, affordable child care services, services that will be available in every region of Canada. We found that the child population in the Territories and on Indian reserves is increasing substantially compared to other parts of Canada. Yet there are relatively no child care services at all or extremely inadequate and perhaps even risky services there. There is not the kind of quality and funding that is required.

We must have a generous child care program. I am glad the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) mentioned child care in his speech. We will be waiting anxiously to see how many dollars are put toward that, and what the focus will be so that it will be a major step toward improving the quality of child care across Canada. Working parents should not have to worry about their children having good care, care which helps them to grow as individuals.

If course, we need a system that will also apply to families regardless of income. When we look at child care, we find that it is the average income family and not the very poorest family that does not receive any help with child care expenses. The poorest families receive help through the Canada Assistance Plan, although there is a great deal to be done there as well. We need a comprehensive program.

In some kind of comprehensive social policy of the future, I hope we can move toward a much more improved parental leave system so that mothers and fathers both can have a chance to share in parenting. Again, this is a change in the traditional concept of families. Mothers and fathers both should take turns at parenting, particularly during the first two

years of a child's life, the very important time from infancy to toddler stage when the future personality of a child is developing. It is important that parents have real economic choices which will allow them to do their own parenting, and certainly more generous parental leave would assist in that.

My colleagues and I wish to see a Canada in which incomes above the poverty line are guaranteed and in which parents of children will not have to line up at food banks in order to supplement unemployment insurance benefits or meagre welfare incomes. In Vancouver—and this is true in other cities as well but I see it at my front door—single mothers have to line up at food banks. It is bad enough that for years single people from the skid row or downtown area of Vancouver have been standing in soup lines. Now this new institution which is being extolled by some right-wingers is forcing young mothers and their children as well as older people to line up in order to take charity, the old charity concept of the 1800s. This is just not good enough for Canada. It is not good enough for British Columbia and we should do something very major in the way of raising welfare rates.

We cannot talk about incomes rising above the poverty line unless we talk about opportunities for employment as well. I hear that members of the Liberal Party are looking into the fact that no guaranteed income policy is adequate unless there are guaranteed jobs, unless there is a program of full employment and unless there is also full employment at decent rates of pay.

As reflected by the Macdonald Commission, it would be very easy for right-wingers in the Liberal and Conservative Parties, and certainly those in the business world, to say that we will take away all the social benefits we now have for families and will put the money into a guaranteed income that will in effect be a guaranteed poverty. That is not what we in this Party want. We want guaranteed jobs for those who are able to work. We want jobs at decent rates of pay far above the minimum wage of \$3.65 per hour, something which is a great disgrace in British Columbia. We want those who cannot work at all or who cannot work full time to receive income supplements that will at least bring their incomes to the poverty level so they can begin to move away from the degrading, demoralizing poverty cycle that condemns their own children to poverty and is passed on from generation to generation.

In any social policy that is to be determined, we must think particularly of the young people who are so disadvantaged in this generation. Young people especially need educational and training opportunities if they are to have any future at all. Many of them simply do not have access to education or training. There must be reasonable fees for education and for post-secondary education in particular. In British Columbia, student grants have been done away with. There should be interest-free loans so that those who are lucky enough to get to university or college are not saddled with debts of up to \$20,000.