

Government Orders

even used an expression, "The death certificate of the family has been written prematurely".

There is another kind of family in this country, namely the provinces. Indeed, does Ottawa's passion for centralization not endanger not only the family unit but also the provinces' ability to meet their responsibilities for their own people? Of course, I am talking about Quebec, but not just Quebec—all the other provinces. What is his experience? What is the hon. member's experience in his community?

[English]

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments and thank the member for the encouragement. He is taking quite a leap here from my discussion of family into the constitutional swamp, as we have talked about before, of trying to relate that somehow to Quebec and its relationship to Canada.

I would say that for many of us in the west if you are asking for the British Columbia perspective, or the perspective from where I come from and where I have been elected from, in many ways we do see Canada as a family in the sense that we think Canada has 10 parts, 10 equal members, 10 siblings, 10 people, all part of this family that together forms a country.

In many ways there is a support in the west, in B.C. particularly, for the idea that when you have a family everyone is treated equally. No one is put down and no one is elevated because a family works best when 10 provinces or 10 people are treated the same.

Although there are different programs and different priorities in different areas, and that is as it should be just as 10 children are unique, they are not treated specially, they are part of a 10 member family.

I will take the leap with the hon. member and I will talk about the family in that sense. Certainly, as has always been said in a family, all members are always welcome and all members are discouraged from leaving.

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I have listened attentively to my colleague in his remarks. He went on at some length with regard to his high regard, and compliment him, for the family. Perhaps he would take a moment or two and explain to the House the definition of family to the hon. member but more important to the party which he represents.

Second, while he is on his feet if he would indicate to the House the role that he believes the state should play in facilitating and assisting the family. I refer specifically to the role of the Government of Canada.

• (1925)

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. Most of my discussion tonight was about my concern for families and the tax disincentives. For example, the court decision I quoted was that in the past somehow married couples were not treated the same as couples who decided to live together. That is what the court ruling referred to.

I have been talking about the need for the state through its tax laws and through other means to monetarily encourage families especially while they are raising children. That is basically what I was talking about. We have to find ways to make sure that we do not penalize people for trying to raise a family.

I do not have the motion in front of me, but it refers to children, young adults and families. I do not think anyone will dispute the idea that we need to support families because families are our future.

We see the government's role as supporting the financial needs of people rather than picking a program and stating: "This is the program you have to try to fit into, whether you are a square peg in a round hole". Instead we should say: "If you have a financial need, then the social contract is there to make sure you do not fall through the cracks and be left to your own devices".

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, tonight I am going to speak about a subject that is dear to everyone's heart and in particular to our electorate in this country.

When I was running for office I found, as I am sure many members did, that one of the biggest considerations and concerns of Canadians was what was going to happen to their health care. There were a lot of concerns and a lot of problems and nobody knew which way to go. Canadians are very concerned about what is going to happen to their health care in the future. To that extent I would say that their health care is probably the most valued thing they have in their lives.

The greatest guardians to good health that exists is our personal responsibility for a healthy lifestyle and our national health care system. The first one the government can do absolutely nothing about, but in the latter the government certainly can.

I believe as a physician and a consumer that our system is the best in the world. It is the envy of people outside of our country. We just need to look at the United States to see how they look enviously at our country to emulate for their new health care program.

Canadian citizens receive the best health care free of charge. They are governed by the five basic tenets under the Canada