

For many wives and mothers, working outside the home is a matter of necessity, not a matter of choice. In many families, both parents must work just to keep the family income above the poverty line. In 1982, almost 10 per cent of all two spouse families were living below the poverty line. If women had not worked outside the home, 15 per cent of those families would have been poor. In other words, 62 per cent more families would be poor if the women did not work outside the home.

Therefore we must have decent child care. We must have support for families. The fathers must be able to share the load at home. There must be the kind of parenting and family relationships so that both parents can share this burden and the home responsibilities do not create additional stress.

I could go on and talk about poverty, I have lots of poverty statistics here, but surely Hon. Members realize that probably more than anything else, lack of adequate income and the worry about poverty is what puts stress on marriages and on relationships, whether or not the couple are married, as well as on their children. It certainly is a major social problem which faces us today when we talk about family life.

According to a consultant for the Canadian Council on Social Development, 630,000 more Canadians will be forced below the poverty line by the May, 1985 Budget. This is something I hope Hon. Members will reconsider, and Bill C-70 did not help in this matter. There is a lack of affordable family housing. The Government, unfortunately, has cut back on social housing. That is something else which creates a great stress on families who live in rented accommodation, or cannot get into a home at a rate they can afford or are overburdened with debts and high mortgage payments.

The stress on children and young people is shown as well in the trends of today's society. We have increasing child abuse. It increased by 50 per cent in 1985. Yet the Government has not taken action on the Badgely Report which was tabled well over a year ago. In fact, I think it is getting close to two years now. We have already started a child care task force but that is not the answer. What we are going to have to do is put money, planning and negotiations with provincial Governments, into a comprehensive and universal child care system across Canada which is affordable.

● (1730)

An increase in child abuse has also been documented. However, I say to the Hon. Member that I am not suggesting that it is not a good idea to promote family life programs. We know that such programs have been started by family agencies, counselling agencies and family centres such as the one in my riding. We know that they are very effective programs which promote communications, assertiveness when necessary, child development, sharing in parental roles and home tasks, involvement of the children in family meetings and so on. It would be a great idea to have a television program which concentrated on these matters, not just to say: "Isn't family life wonderful", but some real stimulation of thinking and involvement on the part of the viewing audience, as well as related discussion groups in communities.

I have mentioned adolescent parents and the concern about the high incidence of teenage pregnancy. A couple of years ago

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Planned Parenthood designed a television program which was especially targeted to young adolescents, to help provide a positive education in family life, to help them understand themselves and their sexuality, and to help them think about responsible sexual behaviour. Unfortunately—and this was in the Liberal regime, so maybe the Conservatives will have a change of heart in this respect—the federal Government cut funds from Planned Parenthood which were designated for this program. The Conservative Government has cut even more funds from organizations such as Planned Parenthood. We should be increasing funding for these organizations and others. Surely this is a way to put our real intentions where our mouths are. It is not a lot of money, but it very important money which should be given priority when we talk about strengthening families.

I am sure we are beyond the point of moralizing about traditional family marriages in a television program. We want to look at the real life situation of many families undergoing stress. Certainly I strongly support Government sponsored programs which would promote family life education, would encourage pre and post-marital counselling, family planning, child development and a whole range of human relations and would perhaps offer problem solving situations in which families are interested and need. I think television would be a very good adjunct, but of course it should go beyond television as well.

As I said, we must have a very positive program if we are to strengthen families. We must recognize new types of families and egalitarian relationships between couples. We must have economic programs, job programs and retraining programs. There must be many opportunities for men and women and young people so that they will have economic security in the future. We must think of the stress on many parents who are forced into having adult children live at home, still dependent upon them, and the kind of frustration experienced on the part of both the children and the parents, not to mention the economic stress created. We must have affordable housing. We must have income support programs which do not condemn families to the poverty cycle. It is not too late to work toward reindexing fully the family allowances and increasing child tax credits even more. Social assistance programs are abominable. To think that the Prime Minister was talking the other day in Quebec about cutting back on the unemployment insurance program, another program which is certainly not adequate for many families with children.

In closing, I commend the Hon. Member for his aim in advocating programs and Government action to promote family life education and to strengthen families. I urge that it go beyond television programs to many of the other economic and social programs which I have suggested.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Louis-Hébert): As Members of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, we may be especially aware of the importance of family life.