

Oral Questions

I was delighted to see the op-ed piece in the *Montreal Gazette* today by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre wherein he endorsed the idea. I am pleased to say that we acted upon it even before the hon. member could get his article published.

In so far as tax on reading material is concerned, the hon. member yesterday was arguing that it was discriminatory against poorer people. Keeping in mind the fact that families earning less than \$30,000 will be ahead of the game with the GST, the GST will be beneficial to those people and make it easier for them to be able to cover the cost. By arguing that we should stick with the iniquitous and unfair manufacturers' sales tax, the Liberal Party would seek to penalize poorer Canadians.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Come on, that is just nonsense. Stop talking, stop lecturing. I think the minister should stop lecturing and start listening. Eighty-three per cent of Canadians said that they do not want books taxed.

As the government tries to move to its good news, good bear, jolly news agenda, will the minister for children bring children good news, withdraw the very negative tax on books, and make them accessible to all levels of society?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks that I stop lecturing. I might put the same suggestion back to her.

I might also suggest to her that if she is concerned about Canada's children, it is time to lift the Liberal barricade in the Senate and pass parental leave benefits that are being stalled by the Liberals in the Senate.

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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, this weekend the Prime Minister signed another statement in support of children's rights, and a year ago his government supported the goal of eliminating child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Last weekend also the Prime Minister said that it was political will more than money which is the decisive factor in the war on child suffering.

It is fine for the Prime Minister to posture on the world stage, but here in Canada his government has capped the Canada Assistance Plan, clawed back family

allowance, and cut funding to the provinces for health and post-secondary education.

If the Prime Minister truly wants to help Canada's children, will he promise this House today that he will ensure that this legislation which impacts so negatively on Canada's one million poor children will be scrapped immediately?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I think all Canadians have a right to be tremendously proud of the leadership that has been shown by Canada and by the Prime Minister of Canada on the international scene.

• (1440)

Let me simply recall for the benefit of the House what it was said last night by Sahira Piracha, the children of Canada's representative on the Canadian delegation to New York. She said: "To tell you the truth, I was optimistic going into it and being there. I can honestly say that I have come back and I am very proud that Canada took the initiative to co-chair the summit and I couldn't even think of the words to explain how Mr. Prime Minister represented us. He did just a wonderful job".

That is the case. The children of Canada and those people who attended the international summit have tremendous pride in what has been achieved by Canada. They recognize the fact as well that under the leadership of this Prime Minister we have reduced child poverty in Canada by over a quarter of a million and that we are determined to carry on until child poverty is eliminated in Canada.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, Canada has become a world leader with a million children hungry and the number of children at food banks increasing day by day. If that is the sort of leadership this Prime Minister is giving, I do not think Canadian children need it. It is time that the Prime Minister responded to his critics and not let his ministers do it. He is speaking on the world stage for Canada. It is time he fessed up to those criticisms.

Bill C-69, which puts a cap on CAP, limits the number of child care spaces available, and limits transfers to the provinces, is in direct violation of articles 24 and 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that he says he wants to ratify. If he is so committed to ratifying this