

adequate standard of living and calls on state parties to take appropriate measures to assist parents in fulfilling this right.

Members will therefore have to examine issues like financial deprivation among children, something which we in Canada call child poverty, and to assess the need for action. In Canada there is the need to alleviate the problem of poverty among children. This is an issue which has quite rightly attracted increasing attention, including in this House.

As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, last November the House unanimously supported the motion by the former hon. member for Oshawa with regard to child poverty. A subcommittee of the House is presently studying child poverty and it is expected that it will present the report in November 1990.

Clearly, addressing the rights of Canadian children in very many instances would require provincial action. Moreover, formalizing the convention in Canada and thereby furthering the aims of a bill of rights for children will require a co-operative effort between the federal government and the provinces, given that many of the obligations in the convention fall within provincial and/or shared jurisdiction.

To this end the federal government is now seeking the support of the provinces and territories for signatures. Efforts are also currently under way through federal-provincial consultation on the question of ratification of the convention.

We on this side of the House very much wish to support a motion on this important subject, but an amendment is required to highlight the important role of the UN Convention and the federal-provincial co-operation needed to secure its ratification.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I am most pleased to be able to rise today to speak on this motion.

It is important to put on record some of my personal background because a great deal of my adult life has been spent in working with children who are in a state of either neglect or crisis. Of course my background is as a social worker.

I started out initially in juvenile and family court working with children who were before the court on

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charges of delinquency and children whose families were before the courts because they had been unable or unwilling to care for them properly or had abused or neglected the children. I have seen a lot of what happens to children when we as a society do not provide them with the kinds of resources necessary to ensure that they mature, that they are nurtured, given adequate health care and education and a stable home living environment.

I have had the opportunity or the misfortune to work on the streets in Vancouver with runaway children, to be involved with one of the very positive and experimental programs, the Senator Hotel, when it had an outreach program on the streets. It was reaching out to young teenage children who were involved in the street scene.

It is not a pleasant scene. It involved drug abuse and sexual exploitation, including prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation.

I have also seen other things that we sometimes do not like to admit happens in Canada. There is an increasing use of child labour in this country. All we have to do is go into any big apartment block or any big office building at ten o'clock at night and see who is cleaning it. More and more they are being cleaned by families, including eight year old kids, nine year old kids, or twelve year old kids. Because the family is the contracted unit we say there is not child labour going on. That is simply not so.

I have seen in government buildings that house child welfare offices children of eight and nine years old working at ten and eleven o'clock at night.

• (1720)

One of the things that we talked about in this House in the last week is the question of literacy. We know the high correlation between unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. While we may talk about adult programs, we are unwilling to face the reality that most of these problems could be solved if we provided the resources to our children.

The time to attack illiteracy is not when the person is 25 years old. The time to attack illiteracy is in Kindergarten or in Grade 1. That is where we need to put our resources. That is where we need to put the resources of special educators. Most Grade 1 teachers can identify on day one the child who is going to fail in Grade 9. Yet, we are so short-sighted we do not put the resources there.