

*Family Week*

say that the family is the basic social unit. The family is the basic social unit because it is within the context of being within a family that we learn what it is to be human beings. We learn what it is to be social beings. We learn that we are, to put it simply, brothers and sisters, that we are part of a reality which is larger than ourselves and that we must understand our individual selves as part of that larger context.

It is within the family context that we learn how to be social, or socialist, because at the family table there is no such thing as free enterprise. At the family table the weak and the strong partake of the meal. At the family table people receive according to their needs regardless of whether they have been bad that day, what kind of mood the father is in or the kind of mood the mother is in. So we see the family unit as analogous to the way in which we should organize our whole lives together, and not just in our homes.

**An hon. Member:** Where do you seat the multinationals?

**Mr. Blaikie:** It is also in the family that we learn what I would call faithfulness and where we learn that we just cannot write off people because we might disagree with them or they might be acting in a way which does not respect the interests of the group. We learn how to struggle over the long haul, and this fits us for the struggles in which we must engage ourselves as adults. It fits us for the struggle for social justice, for instance. So as much as I might like to write off hon. members opposite as an unredeemable lot of free enterprisers and individualists, I will not do that.

I, like other members of my party, will be here 10 years, 20 years and 30 years from now because we will have learned the basic lesson of humanity, and that is faithfulness to the ongoing struggle to bring human life to the fullness that is intended for it.

● (1730)

Often we have heard about the erosion of family life. It has been lamented often by hon. members opposite who now speak against the bill. Let us look at some of the factors which affect family life. Let us examine them critically for a moment, instead of just bewailing them.

I speak now as a member of my own generation, a generation which is having less children and choosing less frequently to have family life. The reason behind this choice is a deep-seated pessimism about the future, which we do not often see. Even parents who came through the economic hardships of the depression felt that through hard work, patience, diligence, thrift or whatever instrument they contemplated, at least there was a bright future for their children. This gave meaning to family life, even though it might have been desperate at times. One matter which threatens family life at this point is this deep-seated pessimism about the future. This pessimism lives within a generation which was born and which has lived with the atomic bomb. Also this generation lives with the threat of environmental disaster. It cannot trust that there is a future into which their children may go with confidence. In my opinion that is the fundamental malaise which lies at the root

[Mr. Blaikie.]

of what one might call the lack of enthusiasm for family life at this point in our history.

Instead of families being created and nurtured by those persons who are most economically and socially able to support family life, we have a situation where more and more children are born into families of non-traditional natures.

I have on my desk an article which quotes the executive director of the Children's Aid Society in Winnipeg. She said that more and more children are being born today of adolescent parents and into single parent families, non-traditional family units. The erosion of traditional family life and the value it represents, has been lamented often by hon. members opposite. But what does the general world view of the government do to non-traditional families? For one thing it makes single parent mothers, who would like to stay at home and look after their children, feel bad because they are not out working at some minimum wage job making barely more and sometimes less than they would receive on mothers' allowance. That world view makes them feel bad because they are not looking after their families. We must get our values straight. Are our values with the family, or are they with the feeling that it is imperative for everyone to get out and work away at some crummy job, in spite of the consequences to the family?

There are families which require income support and action by government so that mothers can remain at home, not at a subsistence level but at a level where a growing number of our children can be raised in a decent and economically supportive environment. Unless this is done, we are sitting on a demographic time bomb. Many children are now being raised in very, very difficult circumstances. I say that with all due respect to the children who, in fact, may overcome these circumstances. Nevertheless, there is a probability of increased social problems because of our inability to get over our hang-ups about work and to recognize family life as the manner in which these women contribute to society. This will cause deep trouble unless we find our way out of these hang-ups.

This leads me to the whole question which has received the attention of the House in recent days and weeks, as rumour after rumour was ground out of the government regarding its intentions with regard to the family allowance program. I would suggest the chlorine gas at Mississauga is only one of many dangerous leaks which we have seen happening under the supervision of this government over recent weeks. I am referring to the rumour that something will be done about the family allowance program, and that it will be done in such a manner as to create the impression that moneys, which at one time were supposedly wasted through universal programs, will now be targeted more effectively and made available to those who need it most. This is the wrong direction in which to move, because of several points. It would take money from the right pockets of people and put it into their left ones; there would be no absolute gain. The money saved through the abolition or restriction of family allowance would be given over and provided in the form of tax credits, according to one of the rumours.