

The Family

earnings, and I think the Government, since the federal Government will be sponsoring this program with the provincial Governments, should come up with a number of answers. I am referring to day-care, a very important point, part-time work and work sharing.

It would be possible to make a program with this approach and to say that, in 1986, we have the traditional family unit, but also the nuclear family, and ask what can be done to help a family or a couple that wants children to survive in the eighties. In that case, I could support the proposal of the Hon. Member. However, if we simply do a program to promote or encourage traditional families, I do not think that it would meet the needs of the majority of Canadians.

We also have to recall that, in the 21st century, two thirds of the Canadian population will be senior citizens. Our young people will make up the families we will need to help us. What type of families, of services and of society will they need?

In my opinion, before setting up such a communications network, we should have answers to all these questions. You cannot promote one type of family more than another. There are now many women's groups, including one called REAL Women, which support the traditional family. That is all very well, but they often forget that the majority of women who are on the labour market and who must use day-care services have no other choice but to earn a living. They often suggest that if a mother puts her children in day-care, she is not a good mother.

I cannot support this view and I have to point out that it is not because you are not a traditional wife that you are not a good wife, and more important, that you are not a good mother.

The image is often what remains the longest in people's minds. Children will watch these television programs. I am quite in favour of having a television program, but it should be done with an open mind and I am concerned that the attitude of this Government as far as the family is concerned does not quite correspond to my own attitude or that of other Members. I do not think that this Government is really open-minded about all types of families. Before doing such a program, I would encourage all the members of the Conservative Government to read the report on family policy published last year by the Champagne-Gilbert Commission. If they agree with most of the recommendations of that Commission, it would mean that the Conservative Government is very modern in its views and I could then perhaps agree with the request of the Hon. Member and support such a program.

Otherwise, I do not think it would be possible to have such a program, unless it were very open and dealt with the nuclear family, the different types of families, the support and childcare services, work-sharing and also the remuneration of homemakers.

This is therefore another aspect which should be dealt with. So if we are prepared to discuss such a report and put forward quite "*avant-garde*" ideas, then I think it would be alright, but

if the approach and the purpose of this communication program is simply to promote the traditional family, I am afraid I could not support it, not that I am against the traditional family, being the eldest of seven children, and I think that it is very important. In 1986, the outlook must be different, and people must know and accept the fact that there are different sorts of families, that children now may have stepfathers or stepmothers, and that this is now part of our life style.

• (1710)

[English]

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak on the motion of the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse). I want to commend him for raising such an important matter in this House. I do not think we spend enough time debating really crucial questions, such as the survival of the family as well as its well functioning. I am certainly very pleased to support his proposal that the Government should consider the advisability of sponsoring, with the provinces, a communications program, including the use of television, obviously, the most important and influential medium at our disposal, which will affirm the importance of marriage and family life.

I note that in addressing his remarks to the House the Hon. Member stressed the great diversity of Canadian families. He did not just talk about the traditional family which is declining numerically as other forms of families emerge. He did recognize the different kinds of age configurations and talked about single parent families. Of course, we see the traditional family is now a minority and so many families have only one parent. There is, of course, blended families and great kinds of extended families. All of these families are part of the richness and diversity of Canadian life. These are facts of life that we must indeed accept.

We also know that many families in Canada are in a lot of trouble. There are single-parent families headed by women, and these particularly have a great possibility of living in poverty. More than a million Canadian children are living under the poverty line. These are very sad facts that ought also to be addressed.

The family certainly needs better presentation on television. There should be greater psychological and social supports for marriage and the family. However, we also need economic supports. It is a scandal to have a million children living in poverty.

Why are so many elderly women living in poverty? It is because they were traditional homemakers and there is no pension plan for homemaker spouses. Women who have devoted their lives to raising their children in a traditional fashion are told what a great job they have done, yet they are told that it is not important enough for them to receive pensions in their own names, and they can jolly well live in