

Government Orders

unit must be the family. Society has yet to develop a better way to care for the young, protect the weak and attend to the elderly.

People who come from dysfunctional families need special help at times and then the government must step in to do the best it can for the individual, realizing that it will always be an inferior choice to a functioning and loving family.

In some ways governments have even played a part in encouraging dysfunctional families because they support people without reference to their family ties. An example is a young person who rebels and leaves home only to end up on some kind of government assistance, or the husband who moves to another province to shirk his responsibility to pay for court ordered support.

Governments should require people to demonstrate at least this minimum level of responsibility toward their relationships and this might even lead to an increased incentive to make families work.

There are other positive things government can do to encourage strong families. I would like to see some aspects of our tax structure changed, especially encouraging couples with children. Last year's tax ruling against married couples in an Alberta court sent a mixed message to Canadians. Incredibly, the courts ruled that while married couples have suffered tax discrimination in years past, it is acceptable because families have suffered less discrimination in the past than other stereotyped groups. Surely this was and is wrong.

Another positive change could involve day care. Those who advocate the welfare state would like to see government workers control the care of children. However, the Reform Party prefers a de-institutionalized setting that gives the choice to parents.

As Margaret Wentz mentioned in her column in Saturday's *Globe and Mail*, if we really want to help parents, why not put extra money directly into their pockets and let them figure out how to spend it? The government's role would be relegated to licensing and monitoring day cares, allowing parents to choose their own system, be it a day care, a nanny or some other personalized arrangement.

I want to touch for a moment on the reasoning of the welfare state and why it can be damaging. Advocates of government solutions feel that the government is somehow objective and that families are unobjective, unenlightened bastions of conservatism.

While it is probably true that families are more conservative than your average university professor, I do not believe that there is any such thing as a value neutral objective authority. If the authority of the state replaced that of the family it would simply teach and impose its own values through that system.

It is quite clear to me that the values of big government are frequently a fundamentalist mish-mash of left wing, politically correct dogma that in its own way is far more conservative and

legalistic than that held by most families. Any concerted, large scale attempt to replace the authority of the parent with that of the teacher, the social worker or even the courts will be resisted on this side of the House.

Where is this debate going to take us? We have heard some discouraging debates in the last few weeks, talk of maintaining universality regardless of need or broadening the tax base and changing RRSP rules. Each of these proposals would adversely affect families.

How will they hurt them? By maintaining or adding new programs at the urging of special interest groups or failing to address our debt and deficit problem squarely and honestly, by refusing to prioritise the dwindling resources of our government we will harm the most vulnerable in society, including young families, in the years to come.

There have also been glimmers of hope during these debates. Speaker after speaker has begun his or her speech with passionate thanks to the people who count the most to them, their families. During the one minute presentations that precede Question Period, many single out family members for special recognition. Honourable mention for the international year of the family continues to sprinkle our discussions.

The death certificate of the family has been written prematurely. Statistics will show that Canadians, especially our youth, hold a strong family life as a measure of true success. It is my conviction that history will judge legislators, at least in part, by the way we treat our families.

• (1920)

I would like to read a quote from someone who shared this concern: "Men say to us, 'there is this problem with the family. How are we to preserve it? It seems to be dissolving before our eyes'. This has been true perhaps always and everywhere. Everywhere good things have seemed to be going. Yet everywhere they are merely struggling to their new birth".

The family has been under many stresses in this generation but it cannot be extinguished. It is merely struggling to its own sort of new birth.

Our social programs as well need to struggle for a new expression in order to serve the needs of Canadians. We have been discussing principles upon which this rebirth can stand. I would suggest to this House that any principle upon which our social programs are reordered must strengthen the social unit which forms the historic bedrock of our nation and that foundation upon which all strong nations are built, the family.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech with great interest. He emphasized the family as a basic core for the way people live and come together in Quebec and Canada. He is quite right, the family is a fundamental value. He also highlighted the fact that governments, our government, are jeopardizing this family unit. He