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Armstrong
Women's Issues - Child care
and Parental Rights

SUBMISSION TO THE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CHILD CARE

MARION DEWAR
PRESIDENT
NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1986

OTTAWA, ONTARIO

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SUBMISSION TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CHILD CARE

I AM APPEARING BEFORE YOU TODAY IN MY CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA.

AS YOU KNOW, IT IS SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL FOR A REPRESENTATIVE OF A POLITICAL PARTY TO BE MAKING A PRESENTATION TO A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE. MY PRESENCE HERE TODAY REFLECTS THE IMPORTANCE WHICH NEW DEMOCRATS PLACE ON THE ISSUE OF CHILD CARE.

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS HAD POLICY ON CHILD CARE FOR OVER TWO DECADES. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT A COMPREHENSIVE CHILD CARE SYSTEM IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT IN A SOCIETY TRULY COMMITTED TO MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS. WE VIEW CHILD CARE AS ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES OF THIS DECADE.

THERE MUST BE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE SYSTEM:

- * TO PROVIDE QUALITY CARE FOR CANADA'S CHILDREN
- * TO ENSURE MORE EQUAL ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN
- * TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE CARE OF CHILDREN IS NOT ONLY THE JOINT RESPONSIBILITY OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS BUT ALSO A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

INADEQUATE CHILD CARE AND PARENTAL LEAVE IMPOSE COSTS ON PARENTS, INCLUDING INVOLUNTARY INTERRUPTIONS IN EARNINGS, RESTRICTED EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS, AND THE

STRESS RELATED EFFECTS OF TRYING, IN THE ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE PUBLIC SUPPORT, TO FULFIL BOTH FAMILY AND WORK RESPONSIBILITIES.

IT IS MOTHERS WHO, DISPROPORTIONATELY, BEAR THE EFFECTS OF THESE COSTS. MOST MOTHERS TODAY WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME JUST LIKE FATHERS. UNLIKE FATHERS, HOWEVER, MOTHERS ALSO DO THE BULK OF THE WORK INSIDE THE HOME. EVEN WITH THEIR DOUBLE WORK LOAD, RESPONSIBILITY FOR PARENTING CONTINUES TO REST PRIMARILY WITH THE MOTHER.

IDEALLY PARENTING, NOW A JOINT RESPONSIBILITY IN THEORY ONLY, WOULD INDEED BE A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: SHARED EQUALLY BETWEEN FATHERS AND MOTHERS. THE CARE AND WELL-BEING OF OUR CHILDREN IS ALSO A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THAT CANADIAN SOCIETY IS FAILING TO MEET.

INADEQUATE CHILD CARE MEANS WE ARE FAILING OUR CHILDREN. THERE ARE LICENSED CHILD CARE SPACES FOR ONLY 9% OF THE CHILDREN REQUIRING CARE. THE COSTS TO OUR CHILDREN OF POOR CHILD CARE ARE HIGH - UNREALIZED POTENTIAL AND DAMAGED LIVES.

THE CANADIAN FAMILY TODAY IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF TWENTY YEARS AGO. FOR MY GENERATION OF CANADIAN MOTHERS, THE TYPICAL FAMILY WAS ONE IN WHICH THE MOTHER STAYED HOME WITH THE CHILDREN WHILE THE FATHER WENT OUT TO WORK AND BROUGHT HOME THE PAY CHEQUE. THE REALITY FOR MY DAUGHTER'S GENERATION IS VERY DIFFERENT.

TODAY, THE STEREO-TYPE OF BREADWINNER FATHER, FULL-TIME HOMEMAKER MOTHER AND SEVERAL CHILDREN REPRESENTS ONLY A SMALL MINORITY OF CANADIAN FAMILIES. MANY FAMILIES REQUIRE TWO INCOMES TO MAKE ENDS MEET. IN THE MAJORITY OF FAMILIES WHERE THERE ARE TWO PARENTS, BOTH THE MOTHER AND THE FATHER WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME. MORE MOTHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN NOW WORK FOR A WAGE OR A SALARY THAN THOSE WHO ARE STAYING HOME FULL TIME, AND THEIR NUMBERS ARE INCREASING YEARLY.

THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER IMPORTANT CHANGES AS WELL. THE NUMBER OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES, MOST OF WHICH ARE HEADED BY WOMEN, IS INCREASING. FAMILIES ARE SMALLER AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED, WITH AUNTS, UNCLAS, AND GRANDPARENTS SCATTERED ACROSS CITIES, PROVINCES AND THE COUNTRY. THE EXTENDED FAMILY IS THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE NORM.

THESE ARE PROFOUND AND DRAMATIC CHANGES WHICH REQUIRE NEW POLICIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN. GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT YET ADEQUATELY RESPONDED TO THE TRANSFORMATION WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE, BUT HAVE PERSISTED IN MAINTAINING PROGRAMS AND POLICIES BASED ON OUTMODED, ROMANTICIZED NOTIONS OF FAMILIES WHICH NO LONGER EXIST. IT IS TIME PUBLIC POLICY CAUGHT UP TO TODAY'S FAMILY. THE COSTS TO CANADIAN FAMILIES AND TO OUR CHILDREN OF FAILING TO DO SO ARE TOO GREAT TO BEAR.

THERE IS AN ACUTE NEED FOR A SYSTEM OF QUALITY CHILDCARE IN CANADA. GOVERNMENTS MUST ACT NOW TO MEET THIS NEED. WE HAVE A CHILD CARE CRISIS IN THIS COUNTRY AND ANY FURTHER DELAY WILL ONLY FURTHER JEOPARDIZE THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CHILDREN AND CREATE GREATER AND GREATER STRESS ON PARENTS.

CANADA'S LACK OF A UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILD CARE SYSTEM CREATES PROBLEMS FOR ALL FAMILIES, BUT SOME GROUPS ARE PARTICULARLY POORLY SERVED: INFANTS, RURAL CHILDREN, HANDICAPPED AND DISABLED CHILDREN, NATIVE CHILDREN, CHILDREN OF SEASONAL, PART-TIME AND SHIFT WORKERS, AND CHILDREN OF THE UNEMPLOYED. THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF THESE GROUPS MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE DESIGN OF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS WITHIN A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM. WHEN WE TALK ABOUT A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM OF CHILD CARE, AND NEW DEMOCRATS HAVE LONG BEEN COMMITTED TO THIS TYPE OF SYSTEM, WE MEAN A MULTI-FACETED SYSTEM TO MEET THE VARIETY OF NEEDS OF CANADIAN FAMILIES AND CHILDREN.

THIS TYPE OF SYSTEM MEANS PROVIDING PARENTS WITH A RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR THE CARE OF THEIR CHILDREN, INCLUDING DAY CARE CENTRES, PARENT CO-OPERATIVES, AFTER SCHOOL CARE, NEIGHBOURHOOD DROP-INS FOR MOTHERS, FATHERS AND CHILDREN AND APPROVED PRIVATE HOME CARE. IT MEANS CHILD CARE IS AVAILABLE TO ALL CHILDREN UNDER 13. IT MEANS GOVERNMENT FUNDING SO THAT COST IS NOT A BARRIER TO ACCESS. IT MEANS SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE TIMES AND PLACES ACCORDING TO FAMILIES NEEDS.

SERVICES WOULD BE LICENSED AND REGULATED TO ENSURE HIGH QUALITY. THE SYSTEM WOULD BE COMPREHENSIVE AND FLEXIBLE, WITH PARENTAL AND EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING. COMMUNITY BASED CARE SHOULD BE THE HUB AROUND WHICH SATELLITE PROGRAMS INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AT HOME WOULD BE INTEGRATED. PUBLIC FUNDS WOULD GO ONLY TO NON-PROFIT OPERATIONS, AND CHILD CARE WORKERS WOULD RECEIVE WAGES AND BENEFITS COMMENSURATE TO THE VALUE OF THEIR WORK.

A UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE AFFORDABLE QUALITY CHILD CARE SYSTEM MEANS SOCIETY IS PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST. IT MEANS ALL CANADA'S CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY CARE. IT MEANS THERE ARE NO BARRIERS TO QUALITY CARE INCLUDING HANDICAP, ABILITY TO PAY OR GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION. TO ACHIEVE QUALITY CARE FOR CANADA'S CHILDREN KEY FUNDING PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED.

CURRENT METHODS OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING ARE BOTH INADEQUATE AND INAPPROPRIATE. IN THE 1984/85 FISCAL YEAR, THE CUMULATIVE SPENDING BY ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT ON CHILD CARE IN CANADA AMOUNTED TO A MERE \$116.00 FOR EACH CANADIAN CHILD UNDER 13. THE FINANCING OF CHILD CARE RESTRICTS ACCESS TO QUALITY LICENSED SERVICES TO THE VERY POOR AND THE WEALTHY.

WHAT CANADIAN FAMILIES AND THEIR CHILDREN NEED IS MONEY - M.O.N.E.Y. ONLY WITH CONCRETE FINANCIAL SUPPORT WILL WE GIVE ANY CREDIBILITY TO THE WORDS THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE CANADA'S MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE. AND WE SHOULDN'T FOOL OURSELVES - A CHILD CARE SYSTEM WILL COST A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY. THE COOKE TASK FORCE ON CHILD CARE ESTIMATES THE COST OF PROVIDING ESSENTIAL CHILD CARE SERVICES FOR ALL CANADIAN CHILDREN WILL HAVE RISEN TO APPROXIMATELY \$11 BILLION IN 2001. WE MUST KEEP THESE COSTS IN PERSPECTIVE - A CHILD CARE SYSTEM IS AS ESSENTIAL TO TODAY'S SOCIETY AS PUBLIC EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE. IN 1981-82 COMBINED FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON HEALTH CARE WAS \$18.5 BILLION. TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CANADA WERE \$17 BILLION IN 1981-82. MODIFICATIONS IN POLITICAL PRIORITIES WERE REQUIRED TO TRANSFORM THE HEALTH AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC, FROM PIECEMEAL, FRAGMENTED SERVICES TO COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS.

WE NOW NEED THE POLITICAL WILL TO CREATE A CANADIAN CHILD CARE SYSTEM. THE CURRENT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS THE OPPORTUNITY NOW TO TAKE AN HISTORIC STEP AND BECOME THE PARENTS OF A CANADIAN UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE AFFORDABLE QUALITY CHILD CARE SYSTEM. AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN 1984, PRIME MINISTER BRIAN MULRONEY, NOT ONLY PROMISED TO APPOINT YOUR COMMITTEE, HE ALSO PROMISED LEADERSHIP IN FUNDS FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. AT THE FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN HALIFAX IN NOVEMBER 1985, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PREMIERS ADOPTED A FRAMEWORK FOR ECONOMIC EQUALITY FOR WOMEN WHICH INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

"ANOTHER ISSUE THAT HAS BEEN CITED REPEATEDLY AS A CRITICAL FACTOR IN ACHIEVING LABOUR FORCE EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IS THE FINANCING OF CHILD CARE. WITH THE MAJORITY OF CANADIAN MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 16 NOW IN THE LABOUR FORCE, AFFORDABLE QUALITY CHILD CARE HAS BECOME A MAJOR FAMILY AND SOCIETAL ISSUE."

THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF NOTED THAT THE ABSENCE OF AFFORDABLE AND ADEQUATE CHILD CARE IS A MAJOR BARRIER TO EQUALITY FOR WOMEN.

WE ARE NOT SUGGESTING THAT A COMPREHENSIVE CHILD CARE SYSTEM BE PUT IN PLACE OVERNIGHT. WE ARE NOT OFFERING A MIRACULOUS SOLUTION TO CREATE THE SYSTEM OF CARE OUR CHILDREN DESERVE TOMORROW. WE ARE SAYING THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW.

AS YOU CAN SEE IN THE RESOLUTION FROM OUR 1985 CONVENTION WE CALL ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE SYSTEM. WHILE THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

HAS NOT YET HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A POSITION ON THE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COOKE TASK FORCE ON CHILD CARE, WE DO SUPPORT AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH SUCH AS THE COOKE TASK FORCE ENVISIONS.

PARENTAL LEAVE IS ALSO AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE CHILD CARE SYSTEM. CURRENT PROVISIONS FOR PARENTAL LEAVE IN CANADA PREVENT MEN AND WOMEN FROM EFFECTIVELY COMBINING THEIR ROLES AS PARENTS AND AS WORKERS. PUBLIC POLICY SHOULD SUPPORT THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF ALL ADULTS IN THE LABOUR FORCE BY ENABLING THEM TO COMBINE WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES EFFECTIVELY. AND FURTHER, PUBLIC POLICY SHOULD PERMIT ADULTS TO FULFIL THEIR ROLES AS PARENTS WITHOUT EITHER GENDER SUFFERING PENALTIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET. PARENTAL LEAVE ALLOWS PARENTS TO TAKE TIME AWAY FROM WORK WITHOUT SACRIFICING THEIR ATTACHMENT TO THE LABOUR FORCE. THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA SUPPORTS EXTENDED AND ENRICHED PARENTAL BENEFITS UNDER THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT.

I BELIEVE AND THE MEMBERS OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE TO BETTER SUPPORT CANADIAN FAMILIES AND THEIR CHILDREN. WE HAVE TO START FROM THE REALITY THAT THE AVERAGE FAMILY BOTH NOW AND IN THE FUTURE WILL BE ONE IN WHICH BOTH PARENTS ARE IN THE LABOUR FORCE. THAT FAMILY NEEDS CHILD CARE SERVICES. INDEED, ALL FAMILIES USE CHILD CARE; IT IS THE PATTERN OF USE THAT VARIES. AND WE NEED TO LOOK AT CHILD CARE AS A SERVICE OUR CHILDREN NEED, NOT A CONVENIENCE TO MOTHER WHO SHOULD REALLY BE AT HOME LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN HERSELF.

WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO OUR CHILDREN AND TO OURSELVES TO PROVIDE A STABLE, NURTURING AND STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR CHILDREN.

WE MUST NOT FAIL TO SUPPORT THE MODERN FAMILY IN CARRYING OUT ITS MOST
FUNDAMENTAL ROLE - CARING FOR AND RAISING CHILDREN.

NDP

OTTAWA

JUNE 9, 1986

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N.D.P. Recommendations

S U M M A R Y

1. NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR CHILD CARE

We recommend a national program for child care be introduced in short, medium and long term stages to work towards development of child care which would be:

- accessible and affordable to Canadian families no matter what their income, employment status or where they live or work;
- comprehensive and flexible enough to meet their family needs;
- developed with parent and community participation to meet the social, physical, language and intellectual needs of their children in a caring and safe environment; and
- non-profit to ensure optimal use of public funds and public accountability.

SHORT TERM - 1987 to 1992

2. DIRECT FEDERAL GRANTS

We recommend that the federal government provide direct grants to the provinces and territories for up to the next five years to:

- stabilize current child care services;
- encourage growth of new services;
- provide for new and expanded facilities and equipment;
- initiate care for children with special needs; and
- improve the wages and benefits of child care workers.

contribute from 25 to 40% of public funding depending upon the economic status of the region.

- cost-share with the provinces and territories 100% of the capital costs for these services. In all, the federal government would contribute from 50 to 80% of public funding depending upon the economic status of the region.

Provinces and territories entering into new funding agreements with the federal government under "the child care and family support services act" prior to 1991 would be assured of federal funding at least equal to the non-matching grants.

4. COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FUND

We recommend that the federal government establish a "community initiatives fund" for the next five years to encourage development of new child care services in Canadian regions where services are inadequate or non-existent such as rural, remote and native communities.

This fund would specifically encourage community and family participation in the development of non-profit services to meet local needs.

The federal government should budget \$26 million in 1987 for this fund.

5. CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT FUND

We recommend that the federal government establish a "child care development fund" for the next five years to encourage:

- new services targetted at special needs such as children at risk, disabled children, immigrant groups and teen-age parents;
- development of family support services including parenting skills and education programs and resource materials;
- development of early childhood education research and materials; and

8. LEAVE FOR FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

We recommend that the federal government change the Canada Labour Code to provide for 10 days of paid leave for parents for family-related responsibilities.

MEDIUM TERM - 1992 -

9. CHILD CARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES ACT

We recommend that the "child care and family support services act" be implemented and that direct federal grants end.

10. MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE

We recommend that maternity and parental leave benefits be increased to 85% of salary, up to maximum insurable earnings, and that the benefit period be extended to 34 weeks.

LONG TERM -

11. NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR CHILD CARE

We recommend that the federal government and the provinces and territories move to full public funding of child care and that parent fees, Canada Assistance Plan subsidies, and child care tax provisions be phased out.

12. MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE

We recommend that maternity and parental leave benefits be increased to 95% of salary, up to maximum insurable earnings, and that the benefit period be extended to 41 weeks.