

Save daycare, or kill the government [CA]^[1]

Author: Ryan, Sid

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

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Surely PM Stephen Harper could not have envisioned the passion he would unleash on all sides of the debate when he blithely announced his government would unilaterally renege on the Liberals' federal-provincial child care deals.

Politicians, parents, child care activists, newspaper columnists, trade unionists and others are all embroiled in the debate. No quarter is given by either side, even in the face of evidence that suggests child care programs provide a pathway out of poverty for thousands of single parents.

Campaign 2000's recent Report Card on Child Poverty in Ontario stated "the child poverty rate has been stuck at 15-16% since 2000, despite strong economic growth." This translates into 443,000 children, or one in six, living in poverty.

One would have thought that this kind of shocking statistic on child poverty would elicit howls of protest. Think again.

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The problem is the debate on child care has turned into an ideological battle between left and right.

Harper wants to appeal to the wistful dream of a bygone era of stay-at-home-moms. The progressive left sees an opportunity to create a national program that will provide tangible support to working families and single parents.

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In the last two weeks, more than 15,000 women and their supporters have signed an open letter to Harper (available online at buildchildcare.ca) because they know this is the time to stand up and be counted.

This is the time for all three opposition parties to present the Harper Tories with a united front. There is an opportunity for this minority Parliament to provide a social program that can rival our cherished health care system in popularity.

It will take nerves of steel to stare down the barrel of a general election that could be triggered by defeat of the government's budget bill. The reward will be in the knowledge that this Parliament made a real difference in the lives of millions of Canadian children.

* Sid Ryan is President of CUPE Ontario

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Region: Canada^[2]

Tags: advocacy^[3]

poverty^[4]

federalism^[5]

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