

Mallick: For parents, a pittance and sneers ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

"It's the Liberals who wanted to ensure that parents are forced to have other people raise their children."

As vicious and callous remarks go, this one fizzes in its own little acid bath. But I credit Human Resources Minister Diane Finley with honesty. She does indeed think this of parents who go to work and place their children in daycare. So do her Conservative colleagues. Maybe that's why there are so few female Conservative MPs. They kept the home fires burning, and burning, and burning, even as the world changed.

Statistics Canada says that in 2009, 72.9 per cent of women with children under the age of 16 went out to work, nearly twice the rate of 39.1 per cent recorded in 1976. That's a lot of women voters for the Conservatives to despise but somehow they find the time.

I can chat away here endlessly, explaining that Conservatives prefer wives to women, mothers to wives, and stay-at-home mothers to working mothers. They like a man who goes off to work, with a wife and children relying on his money. But who has that option nowadays?

So I actually adore the cartoon hate bubble coming out of Finley's mouth. It proves me right (columnist pauses to buff nails of typing fingers).

....

Here's the thing: when Finley makes unfair comments on the most personal, deep love that humans feel -- for their children -- she pits parents against each other. The resulting vitriol is extraordinary and bad for all parents. Everyone has an opinion. I don't want judgments on child-rearing from childless people. Stay out of it.

And as a step-parent who might be said to occupy the middle ground between the childless and the fully childed, I advise everyone, nurturally, to take a deep breath. If you don't have a village to raise your child, you need an employment unit of nannies and daycare workers. That's just the way it is.

....

How I wish Stephen Harper hadn't killed the Liberal daycare plan. The Conservative approach -- \$100 a month whether you need it or not -- shows both disdain and cluelessness. That money wouldn't buy me a roll of TTC tokens and a snow shovel to get the stroller out of the driveway.

Ottawa offers a pittance and a series of sneers. Then it frets about the aging population and how there won't be enough young people working to pay for their hip replacements and dementia therapy. Do we really wonder why people don't have more children?

It's too wearying, too expensive, too arduous. It squeezes the living juice out of us. Parenthood: It starts with fear, pain and joy and then it continues with, well, fear, pain and joy -- I hope I'm not scaring anyone here -- for the rest of your parental life. After the youthful poverty years, the worry kicks in. And the worry never ends.

Spare a thought for fathers and mothers, Ms. Finley. A compassionate one, I mean.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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