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Thursday, March 16, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 16, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that Mr. Jim Silye, member for the electoral district of Calgary Centre, has been appointed a member of the Board of Internal Economy in place of Mr. Stephen Harper, member for the electoral district of Calgary West, for the purposes and under the provisions of chapter 42, first supplement of the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985, entitled “an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act”.

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[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

BUDGET SECRECY—SPEAKER’S RULING

The Speaker: My colleagues, I would now like to rule on a question of privilege raised on Friday, March 3, 1995 by the hon. member for Sherbrooke, notice of which was given the previous day just after Question Period. I would like to thank the hon. member for raising this matter, as well as the chief government whip and the hon. members for Berthier—Montcalm, Kindersley—Lloydminster, and Kingston and the Islands for their contributions to the discussion. I would also like to thank the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington for her intervention on this matter on March 13, 1995.

[*English*]

In his question of privilege, the hon. member for Sherbrooke alleged that there had been a leak of the budget prior to its presentation by the Minister of Finance on February 27, 1995. To support his claim, the member drew the attention of the House to the March 2, 1995, edition of the *Hill Times*, and more specifically, to a comment made by the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington found therein. In response to the question “Is there too much secrecy surrounding the budget?” the hon.

member for Guelph—Wellington is quoted as having said: “I don’t think so. There were some MPs who were told beforehand if major cuts were coming to programs in their ridings. They asked for that in caucus so they could prepare to answer questions”. The hon. member for Sherbrooke then argued that if certain members had “privileged, secret information before budget day” this would be to the detriment of other members and would hinder them in the performance of their duties. The hon. members for Berthier—Montcalm and Kindersley—Lloydminster echoed the member’s sentiments and concerns about a certain group of members being privy to information not available to other members.

[*Translation*]

The procedural issue before us is not a question of budget secrecy per se. Several members cited citation 31(5) of Beauchesne’s Sixth Edition to support the contention that budget secrecy was and is a political convention and not a matter to be dealt with under the guise of parliamentary privilege. Indeed, several members emphasized that what was really at issue was the implication of prior knowledge of the contents of the budget by certain members, and I emphasize the word members, and not others. The questions we must therefore ask are, at first glance, does there appear to be a breach of the rights of certain members, and has something occurred which has impaired the ability of members to carry out their duties as members?

[*English*]

As I have said on numerous occasions, we have a tradition in the House which dictates that we accept the word of an hon. member as truth. Taking the quote of the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington as represented by the *Hill Times*, one might be inclined to agree that there was the appearance that certain members had been given confidential information not available to others. However, in light of the comments made by the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington on March 13, 1995, and the text of her memorandum from which the hon. whip read and later tabled, I accept that the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington was referring to the announcement made outside the House by the President of the Treasury Board on February 21 regarding measures for the downsizing of the federal public service and not to a prebudget disclosure.

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[Translation]

Consequently, I cannot conclude that members of the House have in any way been hindered in carrying out their parliamentary duties. Hence, I do not find a prima facie case of breach of privilege.

I thank all hon. members for their contributions.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

(1010)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 18 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third and fourth reports of the Standing Committee on Industry, pursuant to the order of reference on Wednesday, June 15, 1994.

Your committee has considered Bill C-43, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act and to make related amendments to other acts. Your committee has agreed also to report it with amendments and to provide as well a substantive report which explains the amendments being reported and why other possible changes were not adopted.

I would also like to point out that the third report, which provides explanations and supplementary recommendations, breaks new ground for committees reviewing bills. Your committee felt that such a report was necessary, given that Bill C-43 was referred before second reading, thus broadening considerably the scope of the review that was undertaken.

The 13 amendments that have been set out in the fourth report would, in the view of your committee, significantly strengthen an already good bill.

I would like to thank members of the committee for working together to meet the new responsibilities involved in considering a bill before second reading. The results I believe speak for themselves and deserve serious consideration by all sides of the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the critic for the official opposition on the matter of

lobbyists, I am pleased to rise very briefly today, following the tabling of the report of the majority, to inform Parliament that I have tabled, with the majority report, a dissenting opinion on this bill.

With all we have heard regarding the management of the affairs of government, I feel the profession of influence peddler, as it is called in the business, must be regulated. Legislation was needed to re-establish a relationship of trust between the government and the people.

I thought that, with the campaign commitments the Liberals made in the last election, transparency would be the watchword within Parliament thanks to this bill. I also thought that the new parliamentary procedure, which was supposed to permit in-depth debates and improve the role of members of Parliament, would enable me to amend Bill C-43 in keeping with taxpayers' interests. I was fooled, like many others. The procedure failed to live up to promise as did the wording of Bill C-43, and this is why I submitted a dissenting opinion, which is appended to the report. I wanted to let people know of the two major failings of this bill.

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[English]

BILL C-74

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 56(1), I move:

That, on Thursday, March 16, 1995, when proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 38 have been concluded, the motion to adjourn the House shall be deemed to have been withdrawn and the sitting shall be suspended until such time as the Chair may reconvene the sitting for the sole purpose of a Royal Assent;

That, immediately upon return from the Royal Assent, the House shall be adjourned until the next sitting day;

Provided that, if no Royal Assent has been held by 9 a.m. on Friday, March 17, 1995, the House shall be reconvened for the sole purpose of being adjourned until 10 a.m. on that day.

(1015)

The Deputy Speaker: Would all those members who oppose such a motion please rise. The requirement being 25, and as only two members are standing, therefore, the motion is carried.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

PETITIONS

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to present another petition in this course of action undertaken on behalf of constituents who wish to halt the early release from prison of Robert Paul Thompson.

The petitioners I represent are concerned about making our streets safer for our citizens. They are opposed to the current practice of early release of violent offenders prior to serving the full extent of their sentences.

The petitioners pray that our streets will be made safer for law-abiding citizens and the families of the victims of convicted murderers.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Garry Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions.

The first two petitions are in regard to the Canadian Wheat Board. They request that Parliament continue to give the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly powers in marketing wheat and barley for export.

The other petition goes beyond that and requests that the Canadian Wheat Board marketing monopoly powers include all grains and oilseeds.

The petitioners are from my home riding of Yorkton—Melville.

TAXATION

Mr. Garry Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): The next group contains 38 petitions again from my riding but also from other ridings in and around Saskatchewan.

The petitioners state that the Saskatchewan government is on the verge of balancing its budget, allowing Saskatchewan taxpayers to see the light at the end of the high tax tunnel. Therefore, they ask and request Parliament to reduce government spending instead of increasing taxes.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Garry Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): The last group contains 28 petitions. They come from Ottawa and Toronto and many other areas in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The petitioners ask that Parliament support laws which will severely punish all violent criminals who use weapons in the commission of a crime. They support new Criminal Code firearms control provisions that recognize and protect the right of law-abiding citizens to own firearms. They support legislation which will repeal and modify existing gun control laws which have not improved public safety and have proven not to be cost effective and have proven to be overly complex as to be ineffective and/or unenforceable.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured once again to rise in the House pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition on behalf of constituents of the riding of Kent. They pray that Parliament ensure that the present provisions of

Routine Proceedings

the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously and that Parliament make no changes in the law which would sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide, or active or passive euthanasia.

GRANDPARENTS RIGHTS

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this petition from the constituents of Willowdale asks Parliament to amend the Divorce Act to include provisions similar to article 611 of the Quebec civil code. It states that in no case may a father or mother without serious cause place obstacles between the child and grandparents. Failing agreement between the parties, the modalities of the relations are to be settled by the court. They request Parliament to further amend the Divorce Act to give a grandparent who is granted access to a child the right to make inquiries and to be given information as to the health, education and welfare of the child.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to introduce three different petitions today.

The first petition is regarding Bill C-41. People from my riding and around the province of B.C. have asked that Parliament not pass Bill C-41 and that section 718.2 as presently written not include the undefined phrase sexual orientation in that bill. I am happy to concur with that.

(1020)

TAXATION

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the next petition was sent to me by firefighters in my riding. They ask and pray for Parliament to allow the tax exemption status to rise from \$500 up to \$1,000 for their equipment. I am happy to support that measure as well. It has been stuck at that same level for some years.

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I have the privilege to present was signed by over 1,000 people from my constituency who are outraged over the murder of Melanie Carpenter, an event that occurred I am sad to say within my own constituency.

This petition calls upon Parliament to permit the use of post-sentence detention orders and to pass Bill C-240 which would limit the freedoms of high risk offenders. If Parliament hears this petition, innocent people like Melanie Carpenter would still be alive and dangerous ones like her murderer would remain behind bars.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member may not have been here yesterday when the Speaker invited members not to say whether or not they agree or disagree with the petitions.

Routine Proceedings

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to present a petition that is part of a larger petition of almost 64,000 signatories. This petition contains approximately 18,000 signatures of citizens in and around Edmonton Southwest who are asking that the Young Offenders Act be changed and strengthened so that it would have the effect of deterring criminal behaviour by young people.

There are many citizens across the country who feel that the Young Offenders Act does not do what it was intended to do. These 18,000 citizens of our country are requesting the Parliament of Canada to strengthen the Young Offenders Act.

It is my pleasure to introduce this in the House today.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition to the House of Commons. The petition contains 8,000 signatures collected by representatives of the Animal Defence League of Canada.

The petitioners note that individuals convicted of wilfully causing pain and injury to an animal presently face maximum penalties of six months in jail to two years prohibition from owning an animal and/or a maximum fine of \$2,000.

The petitioners note also that in practice they do not know of any maximum penalty ever having been issued no matter how atrocious the offence. The petitioners state that they find this abhorrent and unacceptable when animals are not appropriately dealt with by our laws.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to enact harsher penalties for offences against animals and establish an education program for judges to help them understand society's abhorrence and condemnation of acts of cruelty to animals.

DRUG PRICES

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today pursuant to Standing Order 36.

The first petition pertains to Bill C-91, the drug patent legislation. The petitioners who have signed this petition are from my district of Regina—Lumsden in Saskatchewan as well as the cities and towns of Saskatoon, Borden, Hafford, Speers, Nipawin.

These petitioners are unhappy with the 12 per cent annual increase in prescription drugs since this bill was passed. They are asking that Bill C-91, which has placed financial burdens on

them and health care programs across this country, be repealed. They request the House of Commons to do same.

PAROLE

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is signed by petitioners from the Saskatchewan communities of Kelliher, Silton, Watrous, Raymore, Punnichy, Ituna, Simpson, Foam Lake and other locations.

Under section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada, convicted murderers sentenced to life imprisonment without chance of parole for 25 years are able to apply for a review after 15 years. They are calling for the House of Commons to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

SENATE

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my third and final petition this morning deals with the Senate.

The petitioners are from my constituency of Regina—Lumsden as well as from Pilot Butte, Saskatchewan. In view of the fact that the Senate costs approximately \$60 million a year and in their view the purpose of the Senate is useless, they are asking the House of Commons to repeal sections 41 and 42 of the Constitution Act which would in effect abolish the Senate.

(1025)

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from my constituents containing 2,700 names, which is also part of a larger petition prompted by the murder of Barb Denelesko.

The petitioners state that Canadian citizens from coast to coast are calling for changes to the Young Offenders Act. They want an act serious enough to deter young people from committing crimes and tough enough to provide real justice. In its current format the Young Offenders Act is not meeting these objectives. The petitioners request that the Government of Canada review the Young Offenders Act of 1992 and amend it accordingly.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

Supply

That notwithstanding any order of the House, that any recorded division to be taken today during Private Members' Business be deferred until Tuesday, March 21 at 5.30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—ECONOMIC EQUALITY OF WOMEN

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ) moved:

That this House denounce the government for its insensitivity and its inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality of woman in federal areas of jurisdiction.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today of tabling a motion regarding an issue related to International Women's Day.

In my opinion, the motion is urgent, given the government's recent actions. The motion is as follows: "That this House denounce the government for its insensitivity and its inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women in federal areas of jurisdiction".

I would have preferred not to have to table such a motion before this House, but its goal is to make my colleagues and Canadians and Quebecers aware that Liberal decision-makers have failed to act on the fine words bandied about within these four walls.

A year ago, I tabled my first motion on the issue, which stated that, firstly, it was important to recognize the principle of economic equality between women and men, and, secondly, that measures must be implemented to guarantee equity in employment, wages and living conditions for women. It was most unusual and remarkable, but government members supported the official opposition's motion.

However, I must admit that they stopped at the first part of the motion and have never gone on to the second. How else can the current situation be explained with the same people in play? How else can we explain the decisions recently taken by this government which purports to be concerned with the economic inequality of women?

How else can we explain the decision to go ahead with the cuts to grants for women's rights organizations which were announced by the previous government? All the while, the Minister of Finance tried to reassure us regarding this issue and, just before the last budget, stated that his government was fully aware of the issue, that

the last budget proved it and that the government intended to prove it again in the next.

I recall that the minister then mentioned the important role that organizations play in promoting women's rights and in improving their living conditions.

How can we explain that, in two weeks, the government will cut funding to the initiative against domestic violence, which finances pilot projects, research, public awareness and education campaigns, etc.?

(1030)

And yet, the Secretary of State declared last March 3: "Violence against women, sexual harassment, inequalities and inequities in employment opportunities, the wage imbalance and gender discrimination must all be addressed. I am pleased the government is continuing to push forward on all these fronts".

Everyone knows that unfortunately little progress can be made without money. How else can we explain the government's policy of tying financial compensation due a woman to her husband's income? Both these trends are obvious in the proposed unemployment insurance and old age pension reforms. And yet, the Minister of Human Resources Development stated last October: "We are putting forward major proposals concerning the problem of family work and the manner in which part-time workers, the majority of whom are women, can be given a certain degree of protection with respect to unemployment insurance and other income security programs".

Since when is a woman's economic equality acquired through dependence on her husband? Women do not accept this approach, nor should they. What explanation is there for the complete absence of references to child care services in the last budget, when the same minister stated on that same date that in the green paper consideration was being given to major child care programs and a national strategy, requiring funding amounting to some 700 million dollars. Where are the budgets needed to create new day care spaces, where are the transfers Quebec is calling for in order to develop its own network? Why is there no interest in finally resolving the thorny issue of pay equity in the public service, when this issue has languished before the courts for several years now, depriving thousands of women of money that is rightfully theirs?

And yet, the President of the Treasury Board said last June: "As an employer we are concerned about pay equity. We would like to resolve this problem as quickly as possible, in order to cut short the long drawn out legal proceeding instituted by the preceding government". Noble words! How does this explain the offensive transfer carried out by the Minister of Finance onto the backs of the provinces, the inevitable result of which will be

Supply

either a reduction in health and education services and social assistance benefits, or a tax hike?

Yet, on February 8, the Minister of Finance stated: "We are fully aware of the need to deal fairly with women's needs". Does the minister sincerely believe that fairness towards women lies in reducing their standard of living? And how does one explain the Secretary of State for the Status of Women's latest decision to abolish the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women?

The main role of this organization was to do research and disseminate information on problems affecting women. It also played the role of government watchdog by analyzing the economic impact of government actions and decisions on women. Yet, in the same speech in which she announced the abolition of this organization, the Secretary of State repeated the Prime Minister's comments: "For its part, the Canadian government has taken up the challenge. Women's equality is not a matter of special rights or interests. It is a matter of social and economic justice. It is a matter of good government".

The abolition of CACSW is not an example of good government that will help women meet the challenge of economic equality; in fact, it is just the opposite. Women's economic status is not improving. They are the first victims of the massive cuts in the federal public service. Some 45,000 jobs will be lost; and women will be hit the hardest. They are still earning only 72 per cent as much as their male colleagues. In 1920, they were making 50 per cent as much as their spouses. They still account for the majority of single parents, poor people, people living in inadequate housing, and victims of family violence. Women expect measures that will finally allow them to achieve the economic equality they are entitled to.

On March 8, 1994, the Secretary of State said this: "For the first time we have had a government sensitive to the different impact of programs and policies on women. It is a government willing to ensure that gender perspective is taken into consideration in all the proposed changes whether they are fiscal, social or juridical in nature". In fact, the decisions and actions taken clearly show this government's insensitivity to the inequality still plaguing women in Canada and Quebec. It is also obvious that this government has no intention of taking the necessary corrective measures.

(1035)

It is obvious that this government truly deserves the severe criticisms levelled against it today by members of the opposition on behalf of Canadians and Quebecers. There is an urgent need to act instead of merely indulging in rhetoric. Is "Towards Equality" not the slogan adopted by the Canadian government to promote the world summit on women to be held in Beijing in September 1995? I think that this government is off on the

wrong foot. It will go there to brag about what it has failed to do at home.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? No one? Did I hear correctly that you will share your time? Agreed.

The hon. member for Saint-Hubert.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know full well that, each time the issue of status of women is raised, we lose a large part of our audience. It is not that too much time is devoted to this subject in this House. It is just that many people do not want to hear what we have to say and, more than anything else, they refuse to take action.

I will speak on the status of women anyway, and the status of women in the legal profession in particular. In Quebec, you can be a lawyer or a notary.

I will focus on women lawyers because, unfortunately, a committee has yet to be appointed to look specifically into the experience of women notaries in their everyday practice. All our statistics on women lawyers were provided to us by the Quebec bar association.

In the legal profession, women experience basically the same thing women experience in any area in which they work; by "work", I mean work outside of the home, of course.

If there has been such an influx of women on the labour market, outside of the home, we know this is due to a large extent to socioeconomic factors. It became necessary for women to help maintain the family income. This has been a determining factor.

In 1951, women accounted for less than 25 per cent of the Canadian labour force, as compared to 58 per cent of adult women in 1991. By far the biggest increase in the labour force participation rate occurred among women with young children, the majority of whom have full time jobs.

Women who, by necessity or by choice, head for a career in law face many difficulties inherent in this line of work. The dysfunctional relationships with male colleagues, the underrepresentation on the bench and the limited number of female teachers in our law faculties are but a few of the symptoms of a serious problem which persists in a world which claims to be eliminating injustice and unfairness.

Women are now part of the labour force, but female jurists form a distinct group. In the public's eye, we are perceived as being privileged. Yet, to become a disciple of Themis, a woman must overcome many obstacles which are not related to her status as a jurist, but to her status as a woman.

The Quebec Bar Association's committee on women lawyers, to which I alluded earlier, took a close look at the issues confronting female lawyers. Unfortunately, the chamber of notaries does not have a similar committee. A poll was conducted among women lawyers and the findings were released in

1992. Those findings are very instructive. They clearly show the obstacles which we must face not just as jurists, but also as women.

In the five years previous to the poll, 71 per cent of female lawyers experienced problems in their vocational practice. It is important to point out that the situation of the majority of these women did not change over that period, whether we are talking about hiring policies, relations with male colleagues, judges and clients, parental obligations, working conditions in general, or career advancement. In short, there is no progress.

(1040)

Women lawyers practice a profession which was defined by men. Our laws and our precedents are set in a masculine mould. Lynn Smith, the dean of the law faculty at UBC, clearly exposed the problem in an article entitled "A system that's changing". Let me quote an eloquent excerpt: "The roots of the current legal system were planted by men. Developed at a time when women could not vote, be elected, become lawyers or be members of a jury, the law sought to protect the interests deemed important by men, given the realities of their lives as men. When the law did take women into consideration, it was solely from a male standpoint".

The most glaring example of inequity comes from the judiciary. An overwhelming number of judges appointed by the federal government, that is, the provincial superior court judges and the Federal Court judges, are men. Overall, only 134 of the 950 federal judges are women.

By interpreting the law and exerting some moral influence, judges help to shape and develop the fundamental values upon which our society is based. Women have been chronically under-represented among judges. In other words, although they have had the right to practise law for 53 years now, the proportion of women on the bench still remains under 10 per cent of all Quebec judges in the Quebec Court of Appeal, the Superior Court, the Court of Quebec or the municipal courts.

At the Quebec Superior Court, where judges are appointed by the federal justice minister, women represented 11.3 per cent of all judges, accounting for 20 of the 176 judges, as of March 1, 1995.

The situation elsewhere in the country is not much better. Madam Justice McLachlin and Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dubé are the only two women out of the nine judges appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. They represent 22.2 per cent of these judges, while women account for 52 per cent of the Canadian population.

As of March 1, 1995, women made up only 10.3 per cent of the judges appointed to the Federal Court and the Tax Court of Canada, accounting for 8 out of these 60 judges. I could go on and on with the deplorable data concerning the Canadian women's place in the judiciary, but it would feel like preaching in the wilderness.

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It is up to the Minister of Justice to appoint more women judges at the federal level. He is duty bound to review the questionable selection process where potential women candidates must have an impressive number of years of litigation practice, when we know that most women cannot consider that kind of practice because of their parental responsibilities. Such a criterion is not applied at the provincial level. It is hard to imagine how a mother could sit at a trial for three intensive weeks. Yet, it is acceptable for a father to be in the litigation practice and to devote all of his time to his work.

Men's schedules do not change much when they become fathers and have young children. However, this is not the case for women, especially those with preschoolers. Whatever their profession, mothers of toddlers are the most likely to change their work schedules.

For example, 95 per cent of career women, including women judges, work full-time, compared with 68 per cent of women who have preschool children and a similar job. Almost one third of women with preschool children and an irregular work schedule indicated that they had chosen such a schedule mainly to be able to take care of their children.

The selection process used does not reveal how a candidate is chosen and should therefore be abolished. Openness is a necessity, not a luxury.

(1045)

If the process were more open, the Minister of Justice could no longer hide behind vague excuses like the lack of qualified candidates. If the requirements are the same for men and women, they automatically create inequities since, in general, women do not practise the profession in the same way that men do.

Treating both sexes the same way is creating inequities. The low representation of women among judges is in no way a reflection of their availability since in Quebec they now represent almost a fifth of the Bar membership eligible for the bench, that is, people who have been practising law for at least ten years. Furthermore, with the increased numbers of women who have entered the legal profession since the early eighties we can expect that the number of women eligible for appointment will increase rapidly in the next few years.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Will we see an increase in the number of women appointed to the bench proportionate to their representation among the most experienced members of the legal profession? Time will tell.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our colleague from Saint-Hubert raises an issue that is both sensitive and real.

Indeed, in Quebec like everywhere else in Canada, women are clearly under-represented in the judiciary. I have vivid memories of the 1984 election campaign where the leaders of the four federal parties were proposing gender equality. The gov-

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ernments that have been in power since that time have done nothing, or almost nothing in this respect.

My colleague from Saint-Hubert asked a question of the Minister of Justice who will obviously avoid giving an answer. I would like to ask my colleague from Saint-Hubert if, in her opinion, the federal government demonstrates the will to achieve, within a reasonable time frame, equity in appointments to the bench.

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, the answer is a simple no. Unfortunately, since the Liberal government came into office in 1993, it has not demonstrated the will to appoint more women to the bench. We just have to look at the appointments that have been made.

On this subject, I would like to add that it is often said that if women are under-represented in the system, it is because they do not want to be elected to the House of Commons, they do not want to attend the conventions, they do not want to take part in the nomination process.

I would immediately say to that that the problem is not that women do not want to participate, but rather that they often do not want to be part of a system that was established by men for men. Women are not used to fighting with each other for a position. They are used to getting a position because of their skills.

When they go to a convention or a nomination meeting and see everybody bickering on the floor, they are very uncomfortable. That is why there are not too many women in politics.

I just wanted to add this observation to explain that it is often for that reason that, unfortunately, there are not more women in this House.

[*English*]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank opposition members for bringing forward this debate. I rise in the House today to express my deep pride in the government's record in promoting social justice and economic parity for the women of Canada.

I am encouraged by the interest shown by the hon. member of the opposition in the issues of women's economic equality, for what could be more important to Canada than the welfare of more than half its population. I believe it is 52 per cent. It is only when women and families thrive that our country will be renewed.

(1050)

I welcome the invitation to demonstrate to my colleagues that the federal government can be counted on to keep its promises. We said we would and we are reshaping the country, making it economically strong, socially just and proud of the rich diversity of its people.

Our plan for Canada outlined in "Creating Opportunity" is firmly anchored in the principle that governing is about people. The motion before the House raises an important question: What has the track record of the government been on issues that affect the economic status of women? The short answer is that the government has done a great deal. The government made commitments in the last election campaign and is living up to them.

In the few minutes available to me today I want to discuss the actions we have taken in the important area of employment programs. I want to look briefly at the record in unemployment insurance and I want to talk about the child care issue. I will finish with some comments on the government's proposal for changes to the Employment Equity Act. The document is an empowering document not just for women but for the disabled, for aboriginals and for visible minorities.

First let me establish the context. It has become a truism that the best social program is a job. That point has been made by people from both the right and left of the political spectrum. Therefore well over 400,000 people can say that they have taken part in the greatest social program of all since the government took office in October 1993. There is every evidence that the record will continue strongly and that these are predominantly good jobs and full time work. Women are claiming their full share of the growth.

Let me give a personal view of what it is to be a woman and what it is to be a woman in an area that used to be exclusively male in the number of areas I have occupied in my career. I was in the civil service for many years before I entered politics. My experience was that I never had a problem working with men because those were the people to whom I had the most exposure in the levels I occupied in senior management. It gave me a great deal of opportunity to build human relationships that had a certain dynamic and express co-operation and a bit of a positive attitude about working with other people.

However the real experience I have as a woman comes from the fact that the most influential people in my life have been women. My grandmother was a medicine woman. She was an orator. She was the anchor in my family. She was the leader in my family. There are many strong men in my family. The women in my family are very strong women. They see the opportunity for greatness in almost every opportunity that comes their way.

Another most influential woman in my life has been my stepmother who adopted me when I was three months old. She took the opportunity to teach me good things. I cannot think of a thing women have gained that has just been given to them. I cannot see an empowerment process that women have not fought hard for. Women are truly the instrument of their own empowerment. We are 52 per cent of the population. If women use that

instrument, if women use that power device sincerely, it will be the essence of how great our accomplishment can be.

I have travelled around the world. I have seen other societies, other groups across different nations. It sort of sets a stage for what we have in Canada. In our party we have the whole idea of equality of opportunity and I really believe in it. It is interesting when we think about people like Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of a former president of the United States, who said: "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent". I feel that way about being a woman.

(1055)

I feel that women have certain natural talents. That does not make us better than men. It just makes us as good as we can be. It gives us the capacity for nurturing, the capacity for co-operation, the capacity for vision, and the capacity for sharing. We are not keeping the power to ourselves but we are sharing the power. The use of a power in a very positive way is a dynamic that women bring to politics, to business and to social development. It is a different style. It is not better. It does not create inequity. It creates the greatest opportunity for women.

If we look back through history to when women in Canada received the right to vote, no one handed it to them. No one made us persons without the struggle of women. Women themselves went out and put up the fight to gain that right, to gain that recognition. We have fought some big battles. They are not battles between the sexes. They are battles for human dignity. They are battles of the individual fitting in society in a way that expresses true human rights and dignity: the right to work, the right to raise children in an environment that is safe and clean, and the right to raise our heads among others without feeling shame or disgrace even when there are problems. That is the kind of country we live in. That is the kind of democracy for which people fight and in fact in some countries for which people have died.

I come from a family in which women play a very predominant role. The men play an equal role in their own area, but I am talking about women today. I am not saying it is just our day. In fact all the men here today can have the honour of being honorary women if they so desire.

The whole issue of economic empowerment is a different dynamic. Many would say that business is a man's world. That is changing. We no longer have a single income society. We have a double income society. People are working, partnering and sharing. There are children to look after and there are competitive forces that impact on families, communities, regions and the country as a whole. Women are major contributors. Not only do women see the necessity of their positive participation. Men also see the positive contributions made by women. It is necessary. It is absolutely necessary.

Supply

Women make up 52 per cent of the population. I was in Copenhagen. Empowerment to me is reaching out and having the human experience of realizing the differences, of building tolerance, of building acceptance and of approving of people's differences linguistically, culturally, socially and economically. We are all people.

I was empowered by seeing other women. I had the opportunity to listen to female leaders and male leaders from around the world. On International Women's Day there was much mention that despite the fact women make up 52 per cent of the population they account for 70 per cent of the world's poor. If women account for 70 per cent of the world's poor, implicit in that is that children are involved. There are more women in female centred living circumstances or families than there are males.

We realize the imperative of empowering women. For instance, the government in making its appointments to boards and commissions is constantly vigilant and balancing the number of women appointed to boards and commissions, as are other members of this caucus and other members of the House. There is a balance. It is definitely a commitment of the Prime Minister and the cabinet.

(1100)

There is still a greater opportunity for us to look at some of the most economically related boards, to look at the financial institutions and to be able to appoint women. There are women who are qualified, woman who have years of experience. I have met them, as have other members of the House. They are women with a lot of experience and equality of education, who have two or three degrees. They are women who are not bilingual, but multilingual.

They are multi-faceted women who have a whole range of talents to bring forward to the process, not only empowering their families and themselves but their communities and this country. There is definitely a role for ensuring that women get to the top in partnership with men. It is not either/or. It is better when they work together.

We also understand the right to be recognized as persons was not conferred on us by a special men's club that thought it was time to make women persons. That did not happen. Women took up the fight. Women won that right.

It is a powerful feeling on Persons day every year watching the women being recognized, outstanding citizens in this country, who have contributed not only to themselves but to their communities and to their country and maybe to the world in a sense by setting an example.

The right to vote was not conferred on women because someone decided. It was a hard fought battle. It was something women felt strongly about and they finally won the right to vote.

Supply

Around the world democratic rights is one of the most powerful tools. Look at South Africa. It is a prime example. The right to vote, the right of assembly, the right to speak, the right of mobility are things women have to make work for themselves. That is the basis of a firm foundation on which to build economic empowerment. That makes it a powerful tool.

At this time the government is aware economic growth by itself is not enough. Women still remain clustered in traditionally female occupations such as teaching, nursing, clerical or sales and service work.

I was so pleased when I went to Montreal two months ago and met with a group of young girls in a classroom dedicated to teaching math and sciences to these young women. I want to see these young girls 20 years from now. I want to see them when they are in high school and university. I told one young girl her seat is waiting for her in the House of Commons.

An hon. member: Look out world.

Ms. Blondin-Andrew: Look out world is right. Those young people are going to be a huge factor not in just the empowerment of their specific gender, but of this country. If we use that 52 per cent resource to its maximum, we can help to abate a lot of the social problems. We can help to abate a lot of the economic woes that befall our communities.

In this country we are so good at building infrastructure. If we need a road, we build it. If we need a hospital, we build it. If we need banks, we build them. If we need airports, we build them. The one thing that is critical and has not happened over different levels of successive governments is building that firm human foundation, that firm human infrastructure that is spiritual, social, cultural and linguistic which will result in children staying in school and will not drop out.

That is not always the result because we have a disempowerment somewhere along this infrastructure path we have taken. I am not saying that we should not have infrastructure. I am saying that if we have it, it should work for us. It should give us the results we need.

(1105)

We should be producing. We have skating rinks and curling rinks. We have these other kinds of institutions and infrastructure. They should be producing better athletes. They should be producing children who will be able to set their goals and reach them with their families and their instructors.

Somehow we have to get back to the basics of making those things work for people, not just women, all people in this country. We need to say real empowerment is not the empowerment of one individual. Real empowerment is the empowerment of our families, of our children, of our communities and of our country.

A country is not about one person. A country is about a collective, all the people who live here, all the people who come here from other parts of the world who believe we still have the best country in the world. I certainly believe that.

I am not turning a blind eye and saying we do not have problems. We have problems, but at least we have the democratic right, the equality of opportunity to be able to deal with those problems, to make a better tomorrow for ourselves and for our children.

If all the government did was rely on the market, as some in the House would prefer, we would see only a glacial change in the labour force situation of women. This government believes it can do better. It recognizes the continuing need to help women move into new growth areas. It recognizes its own programs and services can help to bring us closer to that goal. That is important in terms of the government's employment programs.

Hon. members will be aware of many of the programs and services provided by Human Resources Development Canada. I am sure almost all of us have Employment Canada centres in our ridings. These offices have made real efforts to reach out to women, to make programs and services more accessible, to break down the stereotypes and the barriers to full participation by women.

In the last full fiscal year, 1993-94, more than one-quarter of a million Canadian women, 262,392, participated in HRDC employment programs and services of all kinds. That figure was fully 28,555 more than in the previous year. This is so absolutely important.

There is a lot of technical information I have here which I have not shared with the House. It takes co-operation. It takes true partnership. It takes true dignity and respect to really empower the individual and to empower a community, a family, a country. It can be done by respecting and recognizing the power and the real empowerment of women.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague opposite made some interesting comments. She mentioned points regarding the status of women that certainly raise some questions. I am criticizing my hon. colleague for her government's lack of concrete action.

Both she and her colleagues on the government side point to certain situations, but they have yet to put forward any concrete measures, like a day care system; instead, we get budget cuts hitting community agencies and groups that provide assistance to women, and we get UI benefits based on family income. What does the government intend to do to help women?

They point to certain things, and say that they are aware of the situation, of violence against women, but what have they done to the budget dealing with violence against women? In two weeks there will be no more money for that, and we know very well that the government has not stated what it intends to do about it. As recently as yesterday, the secretary of state let it be known, on

the sly, without consulting women's groups, and in a crude fashion that the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women would be shut down. She said, among other things, that the council had been set up by a movement that was in its infancy.

(1110)

Should we conclude from those remarks that the women's movement has reached its full development? I do not think so. I think that progress has, indeed, been made, but the movement has not reached maturity.

I would like to get specific indications from my colleague. I too can wax poetic about the status of women. I too had to fight to make my way and be elected to this House, and it was not easy. Structures are frequently barriers that are not easily overcome. I agree with my colleague opposite about that, but I would like to have specific facts.

It is no secret that the Axworthy exercise was rather vague as far as the status of women is concerned. The same holds true in other sectors as well, like justice. I would like to hear what concrete action the government will take within a certain time frame and how much money it will spend. With the cuts recently announced, the CACSW will lose 30 per cent of its budget. Women's groups are being told that they are now on a solid footing. Such a statement is dangerous because it is not true. Some groups may be on a solid footing, but discrimination will occur.

How will the minister responsible for the status of women decide which group is to get grants? How will that decision be made? There is a vacuum here and we are left wondering whether there is a real will to help women. In 1995, more than ever before, women will need help because, when we go through a severe economic crisis, violence escalates and women are more than ever in need of help.

[English]

Ms. Blondin-Andrew: Mr. Speaker, I agree that they are confused. On the one hand in dealing with the opposition we find that every time we raise an issue, no matter what it is, women, employment or child care, we are told it is in the purview of provincial jurisdiction, that we have to confer with our provincial counterparts.

The hon. member is suggesting that I make suggestions about specific projects, specific initiatives even though she knows full well we have not had the opportunity to discuss such issues as child care with the provinces, which Quebec feels very strongly about.

There is not a vacuum. The government has undertaken a number of initiatives. Program review and evaluation is one of them. Under that guise we have also looked at women's programs. Change is not a bad thing. What is wrong with change in

Supply

the name of effectiveness and efficiency? That is what the country wants. Canadians are telling us it is not how much we have, it is what we do with it. They are also telling us change is not such a bad thing. To make change in the name of efficiency and effectiveness is a good thing for this country as a whole, not just women.

It is true we are consolidating the women's programs but it is all in the name of removing duplication, eliminating a number of unnecessary allocations. We need to do that to make it more cost effective and to deliver services to the individual rather than build administrative bureaucracies.

[Translation]

Mrs. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, it is true that we are asking for money, we are asking for transfers to provinces so that Quebec can finally get the amount of money that it needs to create its own programs. That certainly does not mean that we want the federal government to create the programs. We should not play on words either.

I will quote my colleague, the secretary of state, who was saying just yesterday that she had two good news. These two good news are bad news for the provinces. First of all, there are no tax increases. What does that mean? It means that the provinces will have to increase taxes in order to fill that gap and to pay for programs which will be created in the different provinces.

Second, tax loopholes have been eliminated; the budget makes our tax system more equitable. Which tax loopholes? The ones for big business, for family trusts or the ones for the middle class and the poorest people? That is the question that I am asking my colleague.

1115

[English]

Ms. Blondin-Andrew: Mr. Speaker, there is no way I would expect this hon. member and the opposition to come forward and endorse and kiss the budget that we presented. I do not believe that.

However, she suggests that in the budget we put forward the provinces have no responsibility. I dare say not. The province she is from is preparing a budget that will have an impact. She is fearful that it will not all be good.

These are tough times and we have taken the directions we believe are necessary in order to get our house in order. We are doing what we feel we do best and we are leaving to others what we feel they can do better. That is the way in which we are conducting our business.

There are different levels of taxation. I cannot speak to all of them but clearly there is a responsibility. We have made our move and the next step is up to the provinces.

*Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a question to the minister about another aspect of her speech. She says Canada is the best country in the world to live in and anyone can enjoy it. As far as I am concerned, I see things differently. Overall, it is true that Canada is well positioned among western countries, but there are groups in our society which are less fortunate than others and the government should try to improve their situation.

I would like to draw your attention to the aboriginal people. Given the statistics on suicide, alcoholism and various other social problems, I wonder if the best way to help aboriginal women would not be to thoroughly examine the relationship between the natives and the federal government and to review, or discard altogether, the Indian Act, in order to put an end to the shameful way Canada has been treating native peoples over the last century.

[English]

Ms. Blondin—Andrew: Mr. Speaker, I am really quite pleasantly surprised to hear the member opposite speaking about the rights of aboriginal people.

It is no secret that I have been very outspoken on the rights of aboriginal people. I am also quite pleased, as was the rest of the country and the House, that the only department that is experiencing growth, even though it is not enough to meet the increase in demand and need, is the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

I am also quite pleased, on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, to note that there is a major devolution and dismantling process under way. Something is definitely happening. As an example, an agreement was signed in Manitoba. That is just one area but there are other sources of self-empowerment.

The government has a whole section on self-government. There have been major comprehensive land claim deals signed with the Yukon, a number in the Northwest Territories and also in the province of Quebec. Those are the real empowering sources on which the government has taken an initiative. It is not just this government but other governments as well.

We are not turning away from the people who are the most vulnerable, at risk and disadvantaged. We are there for those people.

We understand that we can do business in a much more effective and efficient way. The Canadian public agrees and is ready for that. In a sense, we are catching up with public thinking on this. I am sure the hon. member will recognize that in doing so we will not turn our back on the people who really need our help.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Québec for having introduced this most important motion in the House this morning. I especially like the part of the motion which refers to: “—inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women in federal areas of jurisdiction.”

Would the Secretary of State for Training and Youth be prepared to make a commitment before the House this morning that she will take steps at the highest levels of her party to ensure that women will not be affected more than men by the 45 000 job downsizing over the next three years?

(1120)

She said earlier that women accounted for 52 per cent of the Canadian population. Will the ratio be higher than 52 per cent when those 45 000 civil servants lose their jobs? Will there be many more women than men among those people?

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin—Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board is the minister who has that responsibility. I feel he has an eye and an ear to all of the dynamics of balancing on gender the concerns of the people who will be reduced from the work force there. He is considering all the dynamics. I would not even try to improve on the excellent job the minister has done.

I am sure he has a special concern about the view that government has toward the role of women in everything we do. Of course I have support for women in all areas, not just this area, as my colleagues do, some of whom are male.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this issue today. I wish to preface my remarks by saying that although I will not be in complete agreement with my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I believe it is important for all of us in the House to have the opportunity to debate.

It is through debate and discussion that ideas evolve to make for a more effective environment, especially when we are looking at this whole area of the ongoing evolution and devolution, shall we say, of those issues that are particularly important to women as they become more a part of society.

I would like to compliment the minister for youth and training for the philosophical eloquence with which she addressed this issue. My approach is going to be somewhat different because we were asked to assess the impact of the Liberal budget on the whole of society and that, of course, includes women.

Supply

The rhetoric that has been used to promote the evaluation of issues pertaining to women has been in my view for far too long framed in the term women's issues. This narrowly defined focus ignores the economic reality and the impact that is felt, not just by women but also by men, our families and Canadian society in general.

The Liberal budget is a good example of this cross-cutting effect, across lines of race, religion, gender, even age. Today I will address three areas on which the budget has a negative impact as these are related to women. I chose to be very specific. I am glad that I did because it does provide a challenge to government, not necessarily in a negative way, but perhaps to challenge its thinking and approach to many of these issues.

The first element I want to focus on is women and their autonomy. I will use the example of a national day care program, highlighting another broken Liberal promise, as well providing a dialogue for discussion from the Reform perspective. It is an opportunity to which I have long looked forward.

The second area for discussion evolves around opportunities for women in Canada and the hollow ring of support provided in the Liberal budget. The focus for this aspect of my discussion is on the department of the status of women. We know that common sense speaks against the notion of social engineering. There is no strength in a tradition that keeps the issues of women from being addressed in a manner deserving of swift action.

Last, this address will look at creative productivity, meaning jobs, jobs, jobs. Does that not have a familiar ring? The Liberals ran on this strong platform plank but have abandoned it in search of a savvy transparent advantage: the need to be liked by an electorate becoming increasingly frustrated by political posturing that does nothing more than foster dependency through the status quo. We will talk about women in business in that section.

(1125)

Given the economic situation in Canada, the government simply cannot afford expenditures in the area of social programs. Yet the government and the previous one made extravagant promises to Canadians for a national day care system. For financial reasons, the Conservative government broke its promise in 1992-93 and the Liberal government has promised national day care if the economy grows.

The reality is that it is easy for government to continue to make a promise it cannot keep and has no intention of keeping. The Reform Party prefers not to make promises on policies for which it cannot realistically expect to deliver.

As a matter of social policy, the Reform Party believes that the sole responsibility for the care of children lies with parents and that the federal government should not interfere with that

responsibility through economic incentives that promote one form of child care over another nor promote subsidized day care facilities.

By advocating universal day care, the Liberal and former Tory governments are both saying that the responsibility for the care of our children lies with the state and not with the parents. Reform will only support a system that keeps the state out of the homes of Canadians and maintains the freedom and responsibility of parents to care for children while providing some form of assistance to only those parents and children truly in need.

The federal government should concern itself exclusively with matters that fall within its jurisdiction such as fiscal and monetary matters. High taxes, unemployment and rising interest rates are by far the major reasons why Canadians have no choice but to work while balancing homes and child care responsibilities. If the government would balance its budget, thereby giving Canadians the leverage to balance their own, not only would options open up for Canadian parents but the number of single mothers and children living in poverty would decrease.

Financial problems are a major contributor to family breakdown and divorce. By alleviating some of these financial hardships, the government will indirectly strengthen the family. That is this country's richest resource and economic foundation.

The debt and deficit situation no longer provides any leverage to the federal government in terms of lost revenues or further expenditures. The government's hands have become tied as far as new programs or financial incentives are concerned to allow the choice for parents to stay home or go to work.

The Reform Party believes that there are various avenues to pursue in anticipation of long term tax relief for Canadians. We continue our work in these areas as demonstrated by the Reform's taxpayers' budget thereby increasing disposable household income and allowing for choice when it comes to caring for children.

From a taxation perspective, we recommend that the government discontinue the child care expense deduction to level out the playing field between stay at home and working parents. It should pursue tax avenues that are not unfairly balanced in favour of one lifestyle or family composition over another.

However, before it does so, it must determine whether federal responsibilities extend to providing child care to Canadian children because current expenditures including the following: the child tax benefit, the child care expense deduction, equivalent to married tax deduction, GST credit, CPP survivor benefits, UI maternity and parental benefits, social assistance and transfer payments to provinces under CAP. These effectively put it in the day care business and directly into the homes of Canadians.

Supply

This jurisdiction is one for which it currently has no control. The provinces and territories are primarily responsible for the issue of child care. As provinces enact their own child care legislation and establish the accompanying regulations regarding the number of attendants per child, physical requirements of child care settings and training levels, all important criteria, dwindling transfer payments to the provinces become an even greater issue. How can this government justify downloading more responsibility to already cash strapped provinces?

(1130)

What I have explained here would introduce a level playing field for both work and stay at home parents and would have far reaching positive economic implications. The potential for single income families could mean a drastic decrease in unemployment. For each person vacating the workforce a job opens up for the unemployed. The parent who chooses to be at home would have the opportunity and time to volunteer at schools, hospitals or local community centres, relieving some of the financial pressures currently facing these organizations which rely on government funding. It becomes a circle for success.

We are advocating in favour of the family and those measures which will help Canadian families remain the social and economic building blocks of this country. These are the issues which affect and concern all of us, women and men. The issues of child care and the choice to work or stay at home predominantly affect women.

The Liberal budget demonstrates a lack of understanding and commitment to this fundamental reality. Reform's vision of social policy overall includes the decentralization of spending authority to the levels of government closest to the people, an improved framework of co-operative national standards, the empowerment of families and individuals, and a reinvigorated charitable sector.

It is my belief that complete equality has come to reflect the core values of what I call the new feminism. I see any attempt for change in this regard caught up in the social engineering process as sustained and subsidized by Status of Women Canada.

The Liberal budget did nothing to move us away from a tradition that perpetuates an old style of issues management, review, consult, discuss, a never ending circle of policy development going nowhere. Women want action on these issues which are so important to them.

When the Minister of Finance tabled his budget he announced he was transferring to Status of Women a women's program from Human Resources Development. When he undertook this move he transferred \$11.3 million to Status of Women, \$8.6

million of it for straight grants to special interest groups, and \$2.7 million for the administration and distribution of those grants. That amounts to an administrative overdose of close to 30 per cent. No business can afford to operate like this. No family country can afford to operate like this. No household can afford to operate like this. How can our government?

The move was followed this week by another announcement from the Secretary of State for the Status of Women. As of April 1, 1995 the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women will be disbanded. Yet there was no mention in the budget of an amalgamation of the NACSW with Status of Women Canada.

The secretary of state allowed the estimates for the advisory council on the status of women to be commissioned, estimates which were published and released. They were of no value, for not one month later the announcement was made that the advisory council on the status of women would cease to exist. The secretary of state permitted an expenditure of tens of thousands of dollars in consulting fees to produce part III of the estimates when she knew all the information contained therein would not be used. It would not be needed. What kind of leadership is this?

Not only do we have a department failing to disclose, we have wasted taxpayers money in order to further an unknown agenda at this point with respect to the budget. It is this kind of politics which has caused Canadians to find politicians less than forthright.

On the issue of this department change, it is a tentative step in the right direction in terms of reducing the size of government. I acknowledge that. However, in terms of cost reduction it really is tokenism. A saving of \$1 million cast against an exploding debt is cold comfort to Canadians waiting for an improved fiscal climate.

(1135)

We need a dismantling of Status of Women altogether. I say this for two reasons. It would remove the stigma of special interest groups from women who are seeking to make positive change socially, economically and politically. Canadians would view this with favour as we strive to reach true equality without subsidized funding supporting these groups. It is a divisive practice creating us versus them.

We would see government moving away from the cycle of reviewing, consulting and discussing with no action. The issues important to women would be more readily addressed and quickly if it were moved into the various departments for which there would be authority for action. Violence against women could be dealt with by the Department of Justice. The whole issue of breast cancer and research would move to the Department of Health. The finance department could have the oppor-

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tunity to address realistically the whole issue of poverty within single parent families which are usually led by the mother.

Last year in her budget speech the secretary of state was very proud to announce that the government recognizes there are inequities in our tax system and income system detrimental to woman. She suggested there would be a review—another review—to address things such as support payments for women. She suggested the government would improve this situation.

Here we are a year later and absolutely nothing has been done in this area. When a bill was presented by my colleague from Calgary Centre to redress this inequity the Liberal government refused to support it.

One questions the partisanship of the House when sound fiscal proposals are introduced. What is the government's position regarding the interest of women, if only to score political points?

Through effective and non-government subsidized efforts litigation and the simple exercise of expression through votes women do wield a lot of clout. When government officials, politicians, lawyers and judges get on side this will facilitate a powerful dynamic for change. In any quest for solutions the best models are partnerships of public and private resources. Resources mean more than money. Governments cannot act alone. They have neither the know how nor the money.

What I speak of has been a long time coming. Our daughters, my daughters and my grandchildren, granddaughters I hope, will view the years prior to the 1970s as the dark ages. Male domestic violence went unchecked. Divorced women were denied a share of family property. Pregnant women were discriminated against in the job market. Rape could be easily laughed out of court by smart lawyers. Women were expected to declare they would love, honour and obey when they took their marriage vows. In fact 27 years ago I said "obey" and thought nothing of it, but how times have changed.

The world was perceived from a male prism, from the use of language to the raised issues that have altered the course of those issues most important to women. Cases on equal employment opportunities, spousal support, fair pensions and equal pay, as well as sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, pregnancy discrimination and violence against women have been benchmarks for women in the last decade. Remarkable efforts from remarkable men and women have resulted now in a very different world view.

The best models for change are built on the partnerships found in the public and private sectors. This is even more apparent as we move to discuss women in business. Governments provide the environment in which business will thrive. Governments are there to cope with infrastructure development while the private sector seeks to thrive in a competitive and free market.

This leads to my discussion of women in business. Women are starting businesses at three times the rate of men. Of these, 75 per cent start their businesses during the peak child bearing years, placing additional responsibility on the family structure. These, women like most small business people, work long hours, from 50 to 70 hours a week, and earn on average less than \$30,000 a year.

(1140)

I would like to throw out a challenge to those government institutions that become obstructionists to the phenomenon of women entrepreneurs. Women who create employment as small business owners are not a passing fad, but have become a basic trend.

However, there is still discrimination by financial institutions against women who own and operate businesses. This discrimination was detailed in a study released last week by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and takes the form of higher interest rates and a higher refusal rate for financing requests for women than for men. This discrimination was identified despite the fact that the characteristics used for the study were the same, irrespective of gender.

The characteristics were the age of the business, the sector of activity, the number of employees, the sales performance, the number of credit managers, provincial and financial institutions. Externally it would appear that women are participating on a level playing field.

What possible conclusion could be drawn when women business owners operating with the same parameters as male business owners are either refused their financing requests or are forced to pay a premium rate to compete on this so-called level playing field? The cost of financing is therefore unequal for men and women who own and operate businesses. This is the kind of equality that needs to be challenged and changed because it is not equality at all.

The report concluded by making eight recommendations. I find it shocking that the recommendations suggest financial institutions should change their approach toward women business owners, that financial institutions should investigate ways of better understanding the particular situation of small and medium size businesses, especially women owners.

These kinds of recommendations do nothing to encourage responsible business decisions to be made by our financial institutions based on competency and merit. Instead, although identifying that women business owners are treated unfairly by our institutions, it concludes the fault is that of the women rather than gender bias.

The finance minister stated in his budget speech: "There is so much more that we would like to be able to do for the millions of

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Canadians who care little about the world of dividends and derivatives and simply worry about making ends meet”.

It is time for this government to worry about making ends meet. A crippling debt and continual deficit stifling the growth of the nation will not lead us to prosperity. Removal of barriers through proper allocation of tax dollars enabling less social dependency and a more self-confident and trained workforce, empowerment if you will, will ensure that prosperous future for all of us, men and women.

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville—Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take a moment to compliment the mover of the motion, the member for Quebec.

In her motion she expresses the feelings a lot of us have, that we would all like to do more at this time to enhance our civilization, the civility of our country, and we would like to encourage those women's groups which have over time spoken out so eloquently and which have demanded more equity in their lives as Canadian citizens.

From that perspective I am in agreement. At the same time, as the government responsible for the fiscal balance of this country, we have had to cut back and it is not just on the backs of women, although that is the focus of today's discussion.

It is rather pretty well in every facet of our society, whether it is a businessman who used to get a grant or a women's group that used to get a grant. It is possible that neither may get a grant now. That does not mean we should leave our ideals behind. The member's motion helps us to keep those ideals in the forefront as we struggle through this period.

(1145)

As for the last speaker, the member for Calgary Southeast, I find it somewhat difficult to follow her logic. She described the 1970s as the dark ages for women. She used some good examples to describe the days when women were less equal than they are today. At the same time she seemed to agree with the closing down of the council on the status of women and, if I am correct, she suggested that we should close Status of Women Canada.

Does the member feel there has been some progress over the last number of years in the way in which women can participate in our society today in civilian life, in the military and in Parliament? How does she think we got here in 1995? Was it not the work of volunteer women's groups, government funded women's groups, and governments of the past that put budgets together for Status of Women Canada to pursue the issues outlined by women as needing to be improved to improve women's lives?

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. There is no denying that women have moved a very long way. If it had not been for the efforts of the feminists, if we are to use that term here, there would not be the level of awareness of many of the issues I cited in my text. If they had not spoken out change would not have occurred.

We have entered a different era. In my text I was trying to move us beyond the status quo. It is a challenge to government in terms of what I said to find ways to look at equality on the basis of just that with no conditions attached.

We will have to come to terms with the economic reality that the government has very few dollars to spend and start to rely more on volunteer groups as she suggested and those avenues I mentioned in my text to pursue and continue the evolutionary change.

I talked about effective and non-government subsidized efforts. I talked about litigation. I talked about the simple exercise of expression through our right to vote, putting people in the House of Commons. Hopefully that means women and men who will continue to press for change and pursue the opportunities we can without having to rely heavily on governments to fund initiatives. The issue of the dismantling of status of women is an attempt to move us beyond that point.

The government's budget was a startling shift to a different spectrum on the continuum of left to right. The ideology of social liberalism seems to have changed. They too have embraced more of an economic pragmatic approach to how we deal with issues. I am trying to seek different ways of encouraging women as well as men to find alternatives rather than the status quo approach of going to government for money to undertake another policy review or to produce another report with little action.

I appreciate the member's questions and look forward to further discussion with her at some other time.

Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting to listen to the hon. member and her approach to the government's budget.

Independence is very important to women and to all Canadians. The budget is taking a first step toward encouraging more independence. Child care is an important aspect of that. It is not just a lifestyle, as the hon. member has indicated, but a need to allow single women especially to get back into the workforce, which gives them and their families dignity. They can then act as role models for their children and contribute in a very meaningful way to Canadian society. Their children will have the independence to do the things they want to do.

(1150)

One aspect of the budget of the Minister of Finance concerned small business. We should take into account the statistics the

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hon. member has stated regarding the increase of women entrepreneurs in the system. That should be commended because it will spur the country to become self-sufficient and reduce the overall debt. We should take into account the one way in which small business people can get money to improve and enhance their business opportunities is through the source of capital from banks.

As the minister stated, through the budget the banks have to be encouraged to sit down with government to find ways to lend more money to small businesses. Considering that small businesses run by women are becoming more and more a factor, it is in the right direction to give them the tools they need to help our economy get stronger.

We should take into account the benchmark to which the minister was alluding. We should take into account that some banks are lending small businesses less than one-third of all their corporate loans. One recommendation I put forward was that the government should encourage banks to lend to small businesses at least one-third of the amount lent to all corporate donors. Then we would find an increase in loans to small businesses from \$33 billion to \$49 billion, or a 50 per cent increase. That would encourage many small businesses to expand and give women more tools to do much better.

Would the hon. member agree that would be a good step by the Minister of Finance?

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I would ask the member perhaps at another time to explain exactly what he means by government encouragement. I do not have a clear understanding of what he means by encouragement. However I would support government working with the banks to encourage a plan for action such as the hon. member suggested.

I talked about the whole matter of financial institutions lending to women. I was taken aback by the report undertaken by the Federal Business Development Bank regarding the gender bias that appears to be apparent with respect to women and how women have access to money to foster and create businesses that will thrive. That is the point I would like to make here. It was concern for gender bias. Women do not appear to be treated fairly by financial institutions, given the nature of the report I cited in my text.

From the Reform Party perspective we encourage and recommend competition in banking provided to entrepreneurs such as service to customers and delivery of quality products. We also recommend an independent ombudsman to adjudicate problems such as the ones I have mentioned. That is a form of problem resolution without having to go to government for further money to resolve the problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think it is interesting to see there is some agreement on the relevance of the motion presented by the hon. member for Québec. I am not saying that members will agree on every single word or that the government or the other opposition party will be in complete agreement, but there seems to be a common concern about the way women will be treated in the future, considering the changes that are taking place.

I will read the motion again:

That this House denounce the government for its insensitivity and its inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women in federal areas of jurisdiction.

(1155)

I think the operative words in this motion are “the adoption of concrete measures”, because policies on the status of women have been discussed for many years. However, I think governments should be judged on what they have actually done in this respect.

Perhaps I may take an example from every day life. Take, for instance, Marie-Hélène, a young student who intends to go to university next September. How does she see her future as a woman? What kind of future can she expect?

Well, as a result of social programs reform, she can expect to be in debt to a far greater extent during the next few years. If she decides to go for a university degree, she will end up with twice or three times the debt she would have if she were completing her schooling now. Which means that a young woman who wants a career and considers what her future will be is going to say: Well, maybe it is not such a good idea to go all out to develop my potential because of the increased debt load I can expect.

It is very surprising that she should think so under a Liberal government that, in the sixties and seventies, tried to do some interesting things to promote equal opportunity. Today, the government makes it very difficult for people to take advantage of such opportunities by telling them that when they go to university, they will have to carry a much heavier debt load. As a result, only wealthy families will be able to send their children to university, and we are thus reverting to a model we had 25 or 30 years ago, which no one wanted and where equal opportunity for education did not really exist.

So that is an example of a lack of concrete measures from this government, a negative action that will turn the clock back 20 or 30 years and give many women cause for concern.

Let us get back to our student. She has finished her education and would like to start a business. She decides that she wants to get into new technologies. Unfortunately, she is not covered by unemployment insurance because she has never worked a sufficient number of weeks to be eligible, and she cannot apply for

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welfare if her spouse has a job. In other words, she is not eligible for any government program.

I took this particular example because women are more likely to find themselves in this kind of situation. As a result of what I would call systemic measures that are counterproductive, a situation has been created where women who want to start a business will be less likely than men to have access to various types of assistance. This is unfortunate, because the government could have included a number of measures in the current budget to deal with this, but it did not.

I will continue with my example of a young woman looking at her future, making plans and trying to decide how she will go about it.

When she read the red book of the Liberal Party, during the electoral campaign, she might have felt that, whenever she decided to enter a new career, she would be able to take advantage of adequate day care services for her children, allowing her enough time to pursue a career while ensuring that her children receive a proper education and adequate support during their formative years. Now I am not saying that men do not have any responsibilities regarding the education of their children, clearly we have the same responsibilities as women, but the truth is that in the real world we very often ask women to be what we call superwomen, that is to say women able to juggle family, professional and social lives, and more often that not, without much help.

The government could have taken a number of concrete measures, since the Liberal Party had promised during the election campaign that if the gross domestic product was to increase by 3 per cent it would create 60,000 new spaces in day care centers. Recently, we have seen an increase in the gross domestic product, but no increase in the number of day care spaces which would benefit women, except for native people. Thus the commitment which has been made regularly to Quebec and Canada has now been rejected.

(1200)

The previous Conservative government did not live up to this commitment. The Liberals, who were elected on the promise to bring about changes, in this area as well as others, are following in their predecessors' footsteps. We can see why there is still a great deal of dissatisfaction and why the lack of concrete measures on the part of the government can be denounced.

As a result, a young female student graduating with a heavier debt load and the knowledge that adequate day care services will not be available sees no hope of improvement in her situation. When she learns, at the same time, that the bodies acting as watchdogs for the status of women are going to be axed, she has

every right to wonder what is in store for her. This young woman is full of vitality, very enterprising, and wants to go places.

I will now give you the example of another woman also full of vitality, but maybe not as lucky. For the sake of this exercise, let us call her Helen. Helen, a single parent with two children, stays at home. Housing consumes 40, 50, 60 per cent of her income. When she is told that the government is committed to reducing poverty, the first thing she expects is to spend a more reasonable proportion of her income on housing, somewhere around 25 to 30 per cent.

But nowadays, people often spend 50 to 60 per cent of their income on housing. This means that, with a welfare cheque, when you spend between 50 and 60 per cent of it on rent, you have to be a miracle worker in order to feed two children properly and, in the end, prevent them from becoming trapped themselves in the vicious circle of being poor children. Could the Liberal government not have set aside additional money for direct assistance to public housing, following the tour by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development on the reform of social programs?

Oh, no. On the contrary. A press release by the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on February 28, 1995 made a very simple announcement—no fanfare. Nowhere else was this casual approach taken, except with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, yesterday. Its demise was announced quite simply, without any fuss, during debate. The effect of this approach is just as hidden as in a press release. The press release in question announced a cut in the overall public housing budget of \$270 million over three years. What does this say to Helen, the woman I was just talking about, who has a housing unit to pay for and must perform miracles just to survive? What does she understand when she is told the public housing budget is going to be cut by \$270 million? So much for the light at the end of the tunnel.

This is a criticism that may be made of the present government. It fails to take solid measures designed not so much as acts of charity but rather to put people in a position to be able to get out of their present situations. The same example applies with respect to the government's continual attempt to use the American model in assisting poor families. The current approach of the government is to say what the Americans have done, basically. The government says it will help poor families, but with the money it currently gives the middle class.

Do you know what the effect of this is? More and more middle class families will become poor families. Then the government can crow over the fact that it sends them a cheque as a poor family. However, the approach in the past in Canada, and the one that worked, was to fight poverty by allowing the people just above the poverty line to continue to hope that their situation will improve and by giving poor families the means to improve

their situation as well. But it will not come about by running in the opposite direction, by helping those in greatest need in order to bolster the government's image, while withdrawing assistance from those in the middle class and driving them into the ranks of the poor.

I think that we have here another example of the present government's failure to act that must not be allowed to go unchallenged. To accompany all these examples I am going to read you an extract from a speech given by the Minister of Human Resources Development before the World Summit on Social Development, just to show you what little connection there is between the speech and reality.

The Minister of Human Resources Development said: "Our programs must increasingly be backed up by concrete measures to get people back to work, rather than focussing uniquely on income support". What are there in the way of measures to allow female entrepreneurs to assume their roles in the market place? There is nothing which corresponds to what was said in Copenhagen.

(1205)

Second, he also says that affordable day care must be available so that heads of single parent families, especially women, can work outside the home. How can a minister give such a speech in Copenhagen, and on the other hand be a minister in a government that has tabled the budget we have just seen? I think that this proves that the motion by the member for Québec is very relevant and we hope that the government will devote the necessary attention to correcting these major shortcomings in the present budget.

Mrs. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his very relevant comments. I appreciate his way of making concrete proposals to the government regarding economic and wage equality, as well as other issues.

The purpose of the motion is to have the government speak up, not about intentions, but about concrete actions which it might take to improve the situation of women. The secretary of state made a comment to the effect that the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established because women had a lot of claims.

She argued that the situation of women has since improved within the government. Women have, indeed, made progress, in education, business, university and in other sectors. But these women are part of an elite group and not all women had the same opportunities in terms of access to such traditionally male occupations.

I wonder if the hon. member could again show, in concrete terms, how the government often takes credit for measures geared to an elite group, while forgetting poor people, women,

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single mothers and the young who are faced with shrinking job opportunities. What concrete action could the government take?

The government says it wants to stimulate businesses run by women, but again we are talking about an elite. This is fine, but a large percentage of women are left to fend for themselves and the government does not seem to have any concrete plan to help them.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in my short experience as a member of Parliament, one of the things that struck me most is how women's groups, in my own riding and other regions, manage to do so much with so little. On very limited budgets, they find innovative ways to help women and their families, and they get concrete results despite their limited resources.

I suggest that we start by listening to these organizations and by giving them the resources to do their jobs without being in a constant state of crisis. There should be a three-year or five-year plan that would make it possible for organizations, that represent women and help to develop women's goals, to continue their work.

(1210)

In the course of the hearings held by the human resources development committee, we heard testimony from dozens of women across Canada who talked about their experiences and who wanted to provide a better future for their daughters who today are 5, 10 or 15 years old. They want to ensure that 15 or 20 years from now, special programs will no longer be necessary, because every woman will have a chance to develop her potential and equal opportunity will have become a way of life in our society.

The most important thing is to have confidence in women.

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am naturally in favour of the motion tabled by the hon. member for Québec, which asks:

That this House denounce the government for its insensitivity and its inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women in federal areas of jurisdiction.

I therefore denounce the government's insensitivity to the situation of women. I would like to take this opportunity to address one aspect, old age pensions, and to show that the present government, despite all the action it has taken in this area, is not preventing an increasing number of older women from falling below the poverty line. The 1995 budget is definitely sounding the knell of the universality of social programs, including public old age security plans.

By way of example, the ceiling on pension benefits based on the previous year's income puts an end to universality. Even though few seniors have incomes over \$53,000 a year, seniors far from being rich often may earn higher family incomes in one

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year by liquidating assets they have accumulated over the years, withdrawing RRSPs or transferring the latter.

This provision of the budget will affect them directly the following year by reducing their pension benefits. It is a known fact that the old age security programs to which seniors have contributed have virtually stopped being universal since 1989.

I have a hard time understanding why the Liberal government keeps going after this sector of the population, who, we must not forget, built this country. They are the government's preferred target, the one is bent on destroying by imposing unacceptable measures year after year, budget after budget, on these, society's most disadvantaged.

People then wonder why Quebecers want to throw off this federalism and become sovereign. The various old age security programs and the guaranteed income supplement are the principal sources of income of people over 65 years of age. These people, especially women, are much poorer than the population as a whole.

Is there anyone in this House who does not know that seniors are more disadvantaged because they are on pension and have lower incomes if they have not worked outside the home. This is the case of our mothers.

Their work at home was not paid nor used to calculate their retirement pension. Their only income therefore in the years to come will be the Canada pension cheque. And for how many years to come?

(1215)

It is an injustice and the government amplifies it by declaring that old age security pensions will be based on family income in the future. This measure will force a great number of seniors, most of them women, to hand back their pensions.

According to Quebec's minister for the status of women, this measure would set women back 50 years. During that time, they have succeeded in being recognized by society as individuals, but now, because of budget cuts, they will see themselves forced to be viewed in relation to their spouses and to family income, once they retire.

We can justifiably wonder in what direction the federal government is headed when it comes to women's rights. My colleague from the government of Quebec is right when she adds that the principle of family income completely transforms the retirement income security program, replacing what was an insurance program by a social assistance program for needy families.

Canada made very clear public commitments in favour of gender equality and also took statutory measures to reach this objective. I refer to a Canadian document on violence against women. Section E.61 of its action plan states that Canada is

committed to analyzing all of the proposed amendments to the tax system in order to expose all of the discriminatory or negative effects that they will have on women. This principle has now been shelved.

Section E.66 of the same document states that Canada is committed to raising and ensuring full indexation of the threshold at which old age security benefits start being clawed back. Once again, this commitment has not been met.

Canada's commitment is very clear in this document: We are supposed to take all of the necessary measures, in particular legislative measures, to amend or abolish acts, regulations, customs and practices which discriminate against women. Is this what the government delivers in its budget? No. It has thrown all of its principles out the window.

The Minister of Finance offhandedly casts aside studies which have cost taxpayers a great deal of money and ignores basic principles in the name of deficit reduction. On the contrary, instead of going forward and giving seniors, in particular women, the means to attain these standards, the budget places these standards further out of their reach.

Let us be serious. I understand very well that everything has a price and that there is a cost associated with this initiative. However, why not hit banks, tax havens and family trusts and leave seniors in peace. They have sweat blood and tears to build this country which, today, is rejecting them. Is this federalism?

Have seniors not already given enough by working all of their lives and paying their taxes? Who else do you think filled the government's coffers?

In conclusion, I would like to remind you that Quebec's sovereignty does not jeopardize senior's incomes. The threat to old age pensions comes from the federal government. That is the price to be paid for maintaining the status quo, the price to be paid for voting no in the upcoming referendum.

In a sovereign Quebec, a matter like the one mentioned at the beginning of this speech, namely the government's insensitivity to the situation of women, will not even be an issue. Equity will be the order of the day.

(1220)

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite amazed to see this motion by the opposition. I would have wished for a preamble which could have read as follows: "That this House commend the government for all the measures it has taken to date to create opportunities for women".

My hon. colleague is forgetting that, in our 1994 budget, we reiterated our commitment at the federal level to provide \$100 million to the emergency repair program. We also reinstated the court challenges program which provides funding for cases

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relating to the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantee equality rights.

I want to stress that these programs have expanded jurisprudence relating to positive economic action for women. Also, our government announced the establishment of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, another major initiative on behalf of women facing discrimination both on the grounds of sex and race.

I could cite at least 15 to 18 different initiatives this government has taken to date to create opportunities for Canadian women. Therefore, I am surprised to hear the opposition parties attack the government like this. I would like to tell my hon. colleagues that one year after taking office, we have accomplished a lot for women, when compared to the record of the previous government over ten years. I wonder why my hon. colleague does not rise to commend the government.

Mr. Fillion: Mr. Speaker, I have trouble commending this government when the status of women just keeps deteriorating. Women, whether young, middle aged or seniors, see their standard of living going down continually.

Take the freeze on student loans for young people who want to further their education, for example. The point was made earlier that, by the time they get out of school, university graduates will be in debt over their heads. That is what Canada has to offer. It was also clearly demonstrated, with figures to back this up, that no new day care spaces will be opened to allow women to re-enter the labour force.

Again, that is what this government has to offer. Furthermore, there is no indication anywhere that something will be done about social housing. Cuts, cuts, cuts. I say this is a disgrace. In the red book, which in my view has turned black, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in terms of positive measures concerning the status of women.

Of course, one can argue that the government does have a Secretary of State for the Status of Women. But what does she have left besides her title since the advisory council has been abolished? What can she do? With no budget, she cannot go very far now. So, let us eliminate this title, which does more to pay lip service to the government's intentions than to further the cause of women.

[*English*]

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this motion today. Although I have to profess at the very beginning that I do not agree with the motion that has been put forward, I am pleased the member for Quebec has put it forward so that some of the positive moves this government has taken since it was first elected can come to light.

(1225)

It is important that individuals and particularly parliamentarians are periodically forced to think about issues such as equality, be it between gender, or people of different races or colour, immigrants versus second and third generation Canadians or our aboriginal people.

We come to this place to debate the issues of the day. It is important for us to understand that unfortunately our society is not one that can claim with any purity to practise equality in nearly any aspect of life as Canadians. It is unfortunate that as a tolerant society there is still a tremendous amount of intolerance. It is unfortunate that as a progressive society there is still a tremendous amount of bigotry, a tremendous amount of isolationism and a tremendous amount of hate toward those who are different from us, whoever us is in any particular case.

It is important that we try to put this debate into some context. The Government of Canada, my party, has campaigned for many years on platform of equality. The record and sincerity of the statements of a party or political institution, of a parliament or a government, should be judged by its actions.

The actions we have taken over the last 18 months have been fairly significant. That is not to say they are the only actions that need to be taken. It is quite the contrary. When we are dealing with things like inequality, bigotry and racism we must be eternally vigilant. It has a habit of creeping up and when we take one step forward, unless we are very, very vigilant somebody will push us two or three steps backward.

I suspect this motion came about as a result of some of the budgetary measures. I suspect that some people are concerned, perhaps for good reason, about some of the changes that have taken place because of the fiscal realities of rising deficits and debts and the requirement to try to get our economy moving again.

I suspect that the member for Quebec was concerned that the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women is going to be wound up. I too was concerned when this first became a subject of public debate and consternation.

I note the government has taken the women's program which used to be with human resources development and has folded it in with Status of Women Canada. This is a very significant move by the Government of Canada for two reasons.

In the past when governments thought we had money, when it was thought we had more borrowing authority than we should have had, many times dollars were given to special interest groups. They would be given the money and told to go and represent women in society. That was a terrible thing if we think about it. What was the real intent behind that? Was it to try to say that women's issues were not worthy of perpetual vigilance by

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parliamentarians? Did it mean they were to be pushed down to become the purview of a "special interest group"?

I have always had trouble with the way governments have funded special interest groups. Government funds me as a member of Parliament to represent the interests of my constituents. Repeatedly over the years it has become an accepted practice that parliamentarians can hide behind the fact that there are other groups to do this. We use taxpayers' money to front and support interests we are supposed to be raising and protecting in our duties as members of Parliament, as members of legislatures and as members of city councils right across Canada.

I do note this government has a good record with respect to the initiatives it has taken to promote equality, not just within areas of the federal purview. Governments must lead by example.

In my view this government has taken one of the most articulate, forceful and believable individuals in this Parliament and made her the Secretary of State for the Status of Women. Any independent observer would be hard pressed to find an individual in the last two Parliaments who has so consistently, forcefully and sincerely put forward the concerns of women and made it imperative that those concerns be dealt with by governments. It was not a fluke of cabinet roulette when it was decided that the member for Mount Royal would be the Secretary of State for the Status of Women.

(1230)

Most women, most activists and most feminists in Canada, male and female, would agree that the choice of the member for Mount Royal as the Secretary of State for the Status of Women was clearly an indication of the seriousness with which the new government viewed these affairs.

However there have been other things such as Bill C-64, the Employment Equity Act. We came in and strengthened that act. It was one of the acts I have been extremely critical of in the past. I am withholding my praise to see how the recent amendments will play out in actual fact. It is fine to have a piece of legislation, but unless there is overwhelming and compelling reasons for the reporting mechanisms to be adhered to and some enforcement powers behind it we find it can be hollow words on very shallow paper. At least it is a step in the right direction.

The 1995 budget measures had some provisions to try to increase access to capital for small and medium size businesses. As everybody knows about 40 per cent of new entrepreneurs are women. Anybody who has been involved with public life, particularly as a member of Parliament, would know that women are doubly disadvantaged if they go to a bank or a financial institution looking for a loan. They are usually disadvantaged because it will be a small business proposal and the banks do not seem terribly keen on lending money for small business. They should be chastised and at times condemned for that. There is

also sexism at play. Sometimes it is systemic, not overt. Women do not seem to be able to access capital in the same way as men.

More needs to be done. During the pre-election period we talked about establishing special programs for women entrepreneurs. The committee on industry has looked at it. I would encourage members of the committee, with all of the work they have on their desks, to recognize that women are doubly disadvantaged as entrepreneurs. That is one promise made in the red book during the campaign that must be fast tracked. We must find ways to set up women's entrepreneurial institutes and make sure there is real access to working capital for women entrepreneurs.

Anybody who has followed the social policy review, if in favour of it or opposed to it, will know that one of the main components was to try to address women and children in poverty and whether or not the current vehicles, the social programs, are addressing the real tragedy out there of women and children living in poverty.

The proposals put forward in the green book clearly addressed those issues. The proposals were meant to cause debate among the Canadian public about whether or not we had the wherewithal, the courage and the foresight to change social policy programs to ensure that some people who are missed, mostly single parent families headed by females, are no longer doomed to a life of hell and poverty for both themselves and their children. I hope some of the good measures in the green book will come to fruition and we will be able to address the real tragedy of women living in poverty and well over a million children living in poverty in Canada.

The red book commitment on the Canada Race Relations Foundation was fulfilled. Some individuals in the House believe with the fullness of their hearts that it was a waste of money to establish the Race Relations Foundation. All they have to do is go into any minority community in Canada, any black or immigrant community, to find out that the sting of racism still exists in Canada and that unfortunately its sting is no less painful today than it was years ago.

The Race Relations Foundation established by the government is aimed not just at minorities in Canada but at the triple disadvantaged in Canada who in many cases are women. Black women and native women are some of the most discriminated individuals in Canadian society. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation is a tangible example of the government's commitment to focusing government effort and attention to solving the real problems.

There are other matters that I will mention quickly. One is the task force on prostitution. I cannot think of a more violent and abhorrent crime against women than prostitution. The government, through the Minister of Justice, has indicated that we are prepared to take tough and decisive action to stop this heinous crime against society, against women, against our daughters and

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against our grand-daughters. We are serious about it. Tough action will be taken either by the minister or people like me putting private members' bills forward in the House.

(1235)

On the firearms legislation, 50 per cent of women who are killed are killed in domestic disputes by firearms that are kept in the home. We have taken tough and decisive measures.

In conclusion, the debate should not be only about money. It should be about attitude. When I look around this place and I see the quality of members of Parliament, and the quality of female members of Parliament, I know we have come a long way but we have yet a long way to go.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I see that my colleague opposite has also come up with many findings on the status of women. However, the measures he has described are mostly social in nature. They are very worthwhile measures but today's motion deals with the economic measures intended to promote women's equality.

In this regard, I would like to ask the hon. member opposite what he thinks of the proposed labour code reform. I know that in 1993, Bloc members proposed an amendment to harmonize with Quebec's occupational health and safety commission the benefits paid to pregnant women withdrawn from work for precautionary reasons. I know that an internal document is circulating, which totally ignores the motion proposed by Bloc members, even though it was supported by their Liberal colleagues.

Today is a day of action, a day on which we are asking the government to take concrete measures favouring women. In this matter, we see that there are two classes of female workers. Federal public servants who become pregnant and must be withdrawn from work for precautionary reasons earn less than their Quebec counterparts—I think they receive 60 per cent of their salary compared with 95 per cent in Quebec.

Why are they not taking this into account in the proposed reform of precautionary withdrawal?

[English]

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that I do not know why more attention was not given to that measure. I have to be quite honest. I am not entirely up to date on the Quebec legislation about which the member spoke.

However I listened intently and I can tell the hon. member for Québec that I applaud her efforts to bring issues before the Parliament of Canada, the proper venue for such issues to be discussed.

As a member who is here for his second term, let me say that unfortunately far too often good proposals from opposition members are almost treated with dismissal by others in this place. When we are dealing with issues of fairness and equality, particularly issues that affect over 50 per cent of our population, partisanship has to be removed. When good proposals are put forward the government should look at them.

I look forward to getting more information on the matter. However, if it is a progressive measure which seeks to equalize the role of women not just in Quebec but across Canada, it would be the type of measure I would support regardless of the official position taken by my party.

The hon. member for Québec talked about the fact that the debate was on economic equality. The reality is that social equality and economic equality are intertwined. We cannot deny one and expect the other to be a consequence. Clearly we have to move in tandem to take measures, both in legislation and by example as a federal government and as legislators, to ensure that society moves toward not just perceived but real equality socially as well as economically. To deny one is to ensure that the consequences of the second will be that there will not be the equality that is necessary.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Québec has only 30 seconds left if she wishes to ask another question or make a comment.

Mrs. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member opposite that economic reality is linked to social reality. But I would point out that they have cut the budgets of community organizations which operate in different areas and put forward social programs designed to help the most disadvantaged in our society.

(1240)

I agree with the hon. member. What I would like is a concrete fiscal measure that will also support these community organizations' social initiatives.

For the information of the hon. member opposite, an internal document on the proposed reform of precautionary withdrawal is now circulating, which does not mention the motion adopted by the Liberals.

[English]

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her comment. I will certainly look at that.

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The reality is that the best equality is a job, as the member for Western Arctic said. Unfortunately women in our economy do not participate to the fullness of their potential. It is only when we break down those barriers that we will have true equality.

I look forward to working with the member for Québec. I applaud her for her tenacity in raising these issues on the floor of the House. I am sure there are others, such as the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore who has worked tirelessly on behalf of minority women and women in society, who would be prepared to work with her to ensure that these things come about.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with considerable confidence to speak in rebuttal to the hon. member's motion.

I am proud to be a member of a government and party with a heritage of unprecedented sensitivity and action on real and practical measures to promote the economic equality of women. I will deal with the question of our history and the economic reality of women.

The strength and vitality of the women's movement in Canada today can be traced back to the moment of clarity and power experienced 25 years ago. The occasion was the 1970 landmark report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

At that moment women in Canada realized that equality of opportunity had become achievable. It was not just a Liberal government establishing the royal commission against all odds in 1967. It was also the will of women to make it happen. It was the alacrity with which the Liberal government of 1970 moved to respond to the commission's recommendations that inspired women to redouble their efforts to advance their status.

I think the member will agree with me that a Liberal government appointed Canada's first minister responsible for the status of women and the work that took place in 1971. A Liberal government established the office of the co-ordinator of the status of women in 1971 which has now become Status of Women Canada, the federal government's lead agency for government policy co-ordination related to women's equality. A Liberal government created the women's program in 1973 to provide financial and technical assistance to women's organizations and other voluntary groups working to promote the equality of women. The member knows the rich heritage and history of Liberals and their commitment to women's issues.

With the support of the Liberal government today women have succeeded in making the workplace more family friendly. Women are obtaining the support they need to balance work and family responsibilities for young children, for aging parents or for both.

Today with the support of the Liberal government women have also put issues like sexual harassment, pay equity, et cetera, on the workplace agenda. With the support of the Liberal

government women are convincing other areas in society that these kinds of employment issues are not just women's issues. They are societal issues and they belong to all of us, men and women.

With the support of the Liberal government record numbers of women have started their own companies. In Canada today women operate 39 per cent of small businesses. According to the most recent survey undertaken by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business women entrepreneurs are doing very well.

Small and medium sized businesses are the major engine driving our economy, creating 85 per cent of all new jobs in Canada. According to my math, that makes women the major players in job creation in Canada today.

(1245)

What is particularly encouraging is the increasingly dominant role younger women are playing in the creation of new businesses. As *Le Devoir* noted last week, 51.4 per cent of Canadian business proprietors under age 25 are women. According to 1991 figures compiled by the CFIB, this compares to a 1981 figure of 30.6 per cent.

This is a good record and one that speaks highly of the government's support of the economic equality of women. This is the substance of the motion. All indications are that the growing prominence of women in small business will prove to be a major factor in our country's future growth.

I am pleased to note that the small business sector was the focus of several important commitments made in the budget of February 27. The finance minister declared the government is determined to remove barriers to the success of small business. We are equally determined to provide practical assistance to help Canada's small business survive and grow. It is essential that small businesses have access to the financing they need in order to continue being our number one creator of jobs.

To add to this the government will be working with the banks over the coming months to hammer out meaningful benchmarks for small business financing. One of the things we will be looking for is hard data on the success rate of women owned businesses so that banks can come to see that opening their doors and their pockets to women makes good business sense.

The budget also announced that we are substantially reducing government subsidies to business. In today's economy these subsidies are simply not cost effective in terms of job creation, productivity or growth. Nobody knows that case more strongly than business itself.

The government has decided to concentrate on the key engines of economic growth, as I mentioned, looking at the areas of science and technology and trade development. In fact, the government is working to create a policy environment that will

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encourage and reward the innovation and flexibility needed to pursue the opportunities of the new global marketplace.

The potential is clearly there. The government recognizes that the women of our country have the imagination and determination to fully participate in the growing world economy.

It is important for the member who is speaking so eloquently on the gaps in the meeting of our specific and individual needs to note that the government and the members on this side of the House recognize the way in which we need to work and the progress we need to make in order to meet all of the requirements in the provision of the quality of life for women and their families.

In terms of the economic question and the motion on the floor, this motion needs to be rebutted. The Liberal government is fully aware of the commitments we need to make to the economic situation of women.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I am in agreement with my hon. colleague when she says that issues surrounding the status of women in 1995 are also societal issues. I agree with her. However, are there not still many women burdened with the responsibility of picking up their children at day care, and then going home to do another shift?

I would ask the hon. member if she is going to be able to get her colleagues to take action on day care facilities, because 50,000 spaces a year were promised and we are short 35,000 spaces in Quebec.

(1250)

Will the transfer to the provinces take place? We have reached 3 per cent of GDP. It is time the Liberal government delivered on this promise, which was one of the promises in its red book.

I would like to know if we can count on our colleague with respect to this issue, which is a particularly thorny one for women. Without day care facilities, women will not be able to enter the labour market if the government waits too long. There are 2 million day care spaces Canada wide, with a shortage of 35,000 in Quebec.

What we in Quebec want to see is not the enforcement of national standards by the federal government, but the implementation of transfers to the provinces so that the government of Quebec can better respond to a great demand from the women of Quebec.

Furthermore, during the consultations on the future of Quebec, several women's groups asked for this assistance so that women can break into the labour market.

[*English*]

Ms. Augustine: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member across the way that in order for women to fully participate in the economic life of the country, it is important that we begin to

address issues such as women as child givers, women as care givers and women who participate in the care of elders in a specific way.

It is also important to note that we have made some commitments. We made a commitment to increase the number of child spaces when we reach a certain percentage of the GDP. That promise is still on the books. We have not reversed our position on our commitment to child care or the commitments we made to ensuring employment equity and the whole series of issues and commitments we made to women.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, who is also the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary, is probably familiar with numerous issues, particularly those which concern the status of women. A document is currently circulating regarding the Labour Code reform.

I remember that when the last such reform took place, in May of 1992 if I am not mistaken, I proposed an amendment so that the same conditions would apply under both the federal and provincial labour codes, regarding precautionary withdrawal of work for pregnant women. The Quebec Labour Code provides that women get paid 95 per cent of their salaries, compared to 60 per cent under the federal code.

That was a housekeeping amendment which, of course, reflected the notion of flexible federalism, and the Liberals, then in opposition, supported that proposal. Consequently, my question to the hon. member is: Now that the Liberals are in office, why is that amendment not included in the proposed Labour Code reform which the government will table in the next few weeks?

[*English*]

Ms. Augustine: Mr. Speaker, we need the collaboration and co-operation of the members across the way to do a whole series of things. Just as the member is asking for our co-operation in this respect, there are certain ways in which we also should be asking for his collaboration as we move forward.

The issue of the status of women is not just a Quebec issue. It is not just an issue outside Quebec. It is an issue for all women. Therefore we each need to be concerned about the status of women in Canada, to speak about the status of women in Canada and to work for the laws, regulations, policies, equity issues that would bring about the quality of life for all women.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will share my speaking time with the hon. member for Laurentides.

It is always an honour and a privilege to rise in this House, and members should always remember that when they do, they represent those who elected them.

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(1255)

Today, I am doing exactly that, and I am thinking more specifically of the 52 per cent of the residents of Shefford who are women.

The federal budget for 1995 tabled by the Minister of Finance totally ignored the social contract between the government and the majority of taxpayers in Quebec and Canada. The budget brought down by the hon. member for Lasalle—Émard ignores the economic and social realities facing the middle class and the less well-off groups in our society.

This budget denies women the right to a fairer and more equitable society. In fact, the budget is just a smoke screen to hide the real problems.

Left out of the budget altogether are measures to ensure that women get equal pay for equal work and a better standard of living. Last year, the Liberals voted in favour of measures that would be fairer and more equitable. Today, those promises have evaporated.

In fact, in the key sectors of health care, social assistance and post-secondary education, the Liberal government actually decided to make the worst, not the best but the worst of a bad situation. The first to suffer as a result of cuts in transfer payments to the provinces will be women and children.

The federal government has offloaded its financial problems on the provinces and on, Quebec, without considering the impact these cuts will have on women.

In addition, Ottawa has decided to launch a second attack on women who are senior citizens by calculating the amount of their old age security cheque according to the income of their spouses. This reduction comes in addition to the reduction in the age tax credit announced last year.

I deplore the fact that the federal government has offloaded its problems on the provinces instead of eliminating overlap and dismantling tax shelters that deprive the government of hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

The government's priorities are not in the right place and lack vision. You would think Ottawa was managed by a bunch of brokers looking for a good deal and speculating on the short term market with other people's money.

I do not mean to criticize the profession as such, but this is not what we need here in Ottawa. Those who govern us should be responsible people who are prepared to listen to the majority of taxpayers who are sick and tired of being squeezed.

Take, for instance, the Canada Assistance Plan, also known as CAP. Despite the provisions in the assistance plan regarding subsidized day care services, the shortage of adequate and

affordable services remains a significant problem for a very large number of families with one or more children.

The lack of day care spaces is a fundamental concern for low and middle income parents.

This is a deep social concern, a concern which was expressed in the red book, this famous red book of the Liberal Party, which we might have thought would lead to some action plan.

We can read on page 38 of the red book, and I quote: "Canadians with young families need a support system that enables parents to participate fully in an economic life for the country—Recent research by the National Council of Welfare indicates that the single best predictor of whether a family has adequate economic resources is whether it has two wage earners. A growing majority of Canadian families need two wage earners to achieve a reasonable standard of living. The availability of good quality child care at an affordable cost makes the difference between a family living at the edge of poverty and a family living with a moderate standard of living".

(1300)

This is straight out of the red book. A good child care system, affordable for all, is an economic advantage. It allows poor parents to re-enter the work force instead of having to continue to rely on social assistance and food banks. It also creates jobs, especially for women, since on average one job is created for every five children in day care.

Therefore, the Liberal principle of a service allowing access to financial independence remains a promise, it has been shelved, like all the nice sounding election promises which will be conveniently forgotten before the next election campaign.

According to the Liberal red book, in each year following a year of 3 per cent economic growth, a Liberal government will create 50,000 new child care spaces. We have reached this rate of economic growth this year. Since child care which is funded by governments is funded 50/50 by the federal and provincial governments, what will become of the spaces promised by the Liberals, if the government cuts transfer payments to Quebec by \$350 million?

What will become of the 40 per cent of the costs of new child care spaces to be assumed by the federal government, which is evaluated at \$120 million in 1995-96, \$240 million in 1996-97, and \$360 million in 1997-98, amounting to \$720 million over three years? These figures come from the red book. It has been a long time since the red book, the Liberal bible, has been mentioned. What happened to all the nice Liberal promises?

Let us now talk about social housing. As a whole, the 1995-96 budget puts an end to any new initiative in this area. Since close to 17 per cent of Quebec families and 16 per cent of Canadian tenants spend more than 50 per cent of their income on rent, it is

easy to understand why social housing needs are so huge and why offloading will have enormous long term consequences. Women, who represent an important clientele, or 57 per cent of social housing, will be the hardest hit by these cuts.

The 1995–96 budget also means that the 40,000 people on the co-op housing waiting list of the CMHC—The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation—will have to wait months, even years, before a unit is available. There is no longer any hope of building new ones.

CMHC will close 20 branches across Canada. In Quebec, the Longueuil office will close while in Sept-Îles, Rimouski, Val-d'Or and Trois-Rivières, only one person will remain on duty, working at home. Successive decommitments by Ottawa clearly demonstrate the limitations of administrative agreements between Quebec and Ottawa in cases of unilateral withdrawal.

Today, Quebec is caught off guard by the extent of Ottawa's financial pull out in the social housing sector, because it counted on the federal government as the major source of funds in the agreement. Unable to compensate for this unilateral withdrawal, Quebec must review its plans and cancel the construction of new low rent housing units that had been promised to municipalities.

Because of the community help readily available there and the low cost of housing, the co-op formula was an interesting option for single parent families, which are headed mainly by women.

(1305)

Community help such as child care is a very influential factor and explains why a much greater number of single parents living in co-operatives are in the workforce. If we do not respond—

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, the member's time is up. If there is unanimous consent, the member may continue. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Leroux (Shefford): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be careful in my closing remarks.

Access to affordable, quality housing is recognized as a pre-requisite to the fulfilment of other needs, such as education, health, labour force productivity and social security.

In this period of budgetary restraint, Quebec and Canadian society are giving priority to the housing needs of less fortunate Quebecers and Canadians. These are the people who interest us, the less fortunate. Social housing has a particular role to play in meeting these needs. The federal government must continue to give top priority to funding social housing. By maintaining this program as a priority today, we will avoid higher costs in other areas down the road.

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The government has no right to sacrifice so many families, so many women and so many years of hard work in an attempt to maintain harmony in a society that prides itself on being just and fair.

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how can we ever please our Bloc Québécois colleagues? One day, they want certain federal responsibilities to be delegated to the provinces and, the next thing you know, they say these responsibilities should remain with the federal government.

Housing is obviously an area of provincial responsibility. But if my hon. colleague is suggesting that the federal government should assume more responsibilities than the provinces, I am prepared to join him in making representations because I agree with him that the federal government often does a better job than the provinces in certain areas.

The hon. member mentioned day care. I want to point out to him that, last spring, the federal government announced the establishment of a task force on the tax treatment of child support. As my hon. colleague knows, this task force was presided by the secretary of State responsible for women's issues. The task force held public hearings and travelled across the country to seek the opinion of the provincial and territorial governments.

I am sure that, if my hon. colleague gives this government just a little more time, he will see that we can put in place legislation that will meet this need. Just bear with us.

Mr. Leroux (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will say to my colleague that our top priority in coming to Ottawa was to defend Quebecers' interests. That is what we are doing. Second, we hope to set up our own country. Unfortunately, the hon. member did not understand this.

In response to his question, I remember last year's debate on child poverty. However, it must be understood that if there are poor children, it is because there are also poor parents. Children are not living in poverty by themselves. The poorest members of our society are women, and that is what I am saying today.

They are often single parents with sole responsibility for raising their children. As you know, poor children cannot do well in school. If they do not have what they need at home, they cannot succeed and hope to find a way out. It is important to keep this in mind.

(1310)

As you know, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were on this side of the House, they delivered some great speeches. Now that they have crossed the floor—normally, a party, once elected to govern, has a tendency to sit pat—they have not been sitting pat, they have been lying down on the job. What they should do first

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is look at their social policy. As we remember, under Trudeau, they spoke of a just society, an extraordinary society. I think that today's Liberals put all that aside and are now worse than the Tories.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, it is with great pride that I rise during an opposition day totally dedicated to the situation of women, and more specifically their economic equality.

For the second consecutive year, the Bloc Québécois, through the hon. member for Québec, tables a motion dealing exclusively with the situation of women. Special days like this one are essential, since they provide us with an opportunity to take a look at our place in society and, hopefully, further our cause.

Today's motion reads:

That this House denounce the government for its insensitivity and its inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women in federal areas of jurisdiction.

First, I want to denounce a recent decision made by the Liberals which clearly shows the relevancy of our motion. I am referring to the merging, as of April 1st, of three women organizations. Indeed, the Secretary of State for the Status of Women announced that she will lump together the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the women's programs of the Department of Human Resources Development, as well as Status of Women Canada.

That announcement made by a woman is very disappointing. It clearly shows a lack of seriousness and respect for women. The secretary of state should be ashamed and go into hiding for making that decision.

By grouping these services under Status of Women Canada, the Liberal government abolishes the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This is yet another centralizing measure of the Liberals, who do not know any better.

By merging the CACSW, the government is depriving women of an independent organization which conducted research and promoted education for women, not for the government. The independence of the council was essential to allow it to fulfill its mandate. The council could exert pressure on the government. It could point a finger and denounce the government's inaction regarding the situation of women.

As of April 1st, this so-called Liberal government will have total control over that organization. Women will be gagged.

April 1 will be a sad day for women. I trust that Liberal women will stand up in turn to denounce this decision. Solidarity among women is much more crucial than solidarity at a political party level.

I will not say more about this anti-women decision.

As for unemployment, according to the February 1995 statistics, 642,000 women were unemployed in Canada, or 9.5 per cent. In Quebec, the rate was up to 11.6 per cent, or 187,000 women. There were also 280,082 women on welfare in Quebec.

What is the federal government doing to lower the unemployment rate among women? Nothing. It sits tight and puts its trust in the economic recovery. It has adopted a laissez faire strategy.

Where are the jobs that Liberals kept promising? Where are all the training and upgrading programs for women? Where are the services promoting women's presence in the labour market? None of these promises have been kept. The only measure touted by Liberals as contributing significantly to job creation is the infrastructure program which was to create 45,000 temporary jobs over a three year period.

(1315)

The Liberals bragged about this so-called beneficial program. They said it would help men and women get back to work.

The results have been rather disappointing. Seasonal temporary jobs. This program only provided short-term jobs to people already in the labour force and did nothing to create new jobs for the unemployed.

This program completely ignored women on unemployment. Indeed, women's groups had asked the minister concerned to establish certain rules that would allow women to have access to some of these mostly non-traditional jobs.

To my knowledge, the minister did not grant what seemed to be a legitimate request.

Despite all the promises made by the Liberals, we still have women on unemployment, women who work for a while on some project or program, then go back on unemployment and end up on welfare. These women are caught in this vicious circle and will never be able to get out of this difficult situation for good.

The federal government is not helping women, worse, I really think it is harming them. The federal employment, training, upgrading and unemployment programs are not up-to-date, they are not flexible nor creative. The programs, services and conditions have been the same for years now, even though the labour market is constantly changing.

The results of this rigid system are terribly disappointing. Women cannot meet the needs of the labour market rapidly and effectively.

I would like to give you a very concrete example which demonstrates how inefficient the federal system is. A few months ago, I met in my riding office a woman who is a single parent living on a meagre \$170 a week unemployment insurance benefit.

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To get out of this difficult situation, she wanted to attend classes in bureautics offered by her regional school board. This much vaunted program, which offered interesting work prospects, lasted 18 months. The federal government does not pay for 18-month courses. In fact, it only recognizes programs where students graduate after 12 months.

As a result, this woman continued to receive her meagre benefits till the end.

Once her benefits had expired, she enrolled in a program entitled "Introduction to non-traditional trades". Thirteen women registered for this 14-week training course leading to a job. According to the information I have gathered so far—since this program is on now—this program clearly does not work.

Non-traditional trades are not that common and job opportunities in these areas are practically non-existent in a tourist area like mine.

Then, why is the federal government offering this program? Why does it spend money in vain? Could it not carry out some studies to see if the labour market in my region is accessible to these women and if job opportunities are really there? If not, what good does it do to direct these women towards this training program?

Unfortunately, it seems this program is simply offered for the fun of it.

And these women can see after a few weeks that they are involved in something that leads nowhere. And yet, they were ready to invest their efforts and energies in this program to see the light at the end of the tunnel, that is, to find a job.

Instead, they are offered a strangely structured program where they are told about self-esteem and about the need to take their future in their own hands, to go for it. They are almost handed a mirror and told: "Look, you are the only one to blame if you do not work. So, do something about it!"

These women do not want that kind of therapy. They want something concrete, something real. They want to learn something that will help them find a job.

As I see there is only one minute left, I will conclude rather quickly.

Women are worth as much as men. Our society, our lifestyles and our values were such that women were not appreciated for their true worth. It is now time to correct this, and fast.

In light of some of its actions, it is clear that the Liberal government is not ready to take big steps in that direction. In spite of all the promises that were made to women in several areas, the federal government is very hard on women. The announced reform in the unemployment insurance program and old age pension does not augur well.

Thus, I encourage all the women in Quebec to say no to an increasingly threatening federal system.

(1320)

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite has made some remarks that I find very curious coming from her.

Firstly, she talks about solidarity and she belongs to a party that does not promote solidarity among all Canadians, including women. Secondly, with regard to solidarity, we have, on this side of the House, all the women who represent the government who have proven that they are in favour of solidarity. For example, on March 8 of last year, we opened a debate to all women on both sides of the House.

Now, I would like to ask a question of the hon. member. She gave the example of a woman who had come to her office complaining that she did not have access to government programs. Does the member not know that our budget provides for transfers to the provinces so that they can assume responsibility for these programs? They will be the ones who will be delivering these programs. That is what the member's party asked for and that is what we are doing. We both know that when women achieve economic equality, they will have equality in all areas. My question to the hon. member is this: Does she agree with me with regard to transfers?

Mrs. Guay: Mr. Speaker, the government says that it will transfer more powers to the provinces so that we can have our own programs tailored to our particular needs, but it should also consider giving us the money that we need to deliver these programs.

The federal government is getting ready to transfer to the provinces powers or, rather, responsibilities that we cannot afford to exercise. I think it is a very serious problem that we will have to face in the coming years. Imagine! At least Quebec has a good structure, but in some other provinces, particularly the smaller ones, it will be a big problem.

Secondly, when the hon. member talks about solidarity and says that the government cannot count on the Bloc Québécois, I will remind her that, last year, we introduced a bill on unemployment insurance for women. I do not know if the member remembers that, but we asked women in this House to show some solidarity with regard to this bill so that women who work with their husbands would not be penalized under the unemployment insurance program. The member's party voted against our bill that would have been beneficial to women. We called for solidarity among women. I will tell you one thing: as long as this solidarity among women does not exist, regardless of their political affiliation—and it certainly does not exist in this House at this moment—women will never get anywhere. Yet, we account for 52 per cent of the population. The hon. member has nothing to teach me and I think it is time she got her act together. When she sees a bill like the one we have introduced in this House, she should think twice before voting against it.

Supply

Mrs. Bakopanos: Mr. Speaker, I am working for solidarity among all Canadians and, on this side of the House, we have shown that we encourage women to run for elections and get elected. Look at the number of women in the two opposition parties.

But I have a question to ask. We talk about solidarity with regard to legislation. The government recently introduced Bill C-64, an Act respecting employment equity. We asked for the support of the members opposite. I believe that this bill will give women new opportunities to achieve economic equality. Why did the other parties refuse us their support?

Mrs. Guay: Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member is wrong. I could show her a bill that was exclusively for women. The bill she referred to is not legislation for women, it is very wide in scope. We will not support a bill just because the hon. member says so.

The bill we talked about dealt exclusively with protecting and helping women. So, when she talks about solidarity, I am sorry, but I beg to differ. She also mentioned her political party, where there is a fair number of women, a party that encouraged women. I can say that in the Bloc Québécois, we as women had to fight on the same terms as men and I am very proud of having been elected here, not because I was chosen by my leader, but because I fought and won in a nomination convention, like everybody else.

(1325)

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my friend the hon. member for Québec for raising an issue that is both important and relevant. Her motion reads as follows:

That this House denounce the government for its insensitivity and its inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality in federal areas of jurisdiction.

That assessment does not seem accurate to me.

[*English*]

The motion gives us an opportunity, I say to my friend from Frontenac, to discuss an important issue but the wording of the motion is a bit dishonest. To put it more bluntly, it is just not true. During the next few minutes let us examine the record, because it is not true. I am very proud to be here because I take real pride in the government's record in promoting social justice and economic parity for the women of this country.

I am encouraged that the member would put forward the motion on the issue of women's economic equality because what could be more important to Canada than the well-being of more than half its population? It is only when women and our families thrive that our country will be truly renewed.

The motion before us raises an important question. What has been the track record of this government on issues that affect the economic status of women? The short answer is that this government has done a great deal in a relatively short time. The government made commitments in the election campaign and the government is living up to those commitments. Before we get on to specific ways in which the government has honoured its commitment, let us look at the context for all of this.

It has become a truism that the best social program is a job. That point has been made by people from both the right and the left of the political spectrum. Well over 400,000 people can say they have taken part in the greatest social program of all since this government took office in October 1993. There is evidence that record will continue strongly. These are predominantly good, full time jobs. Women are claiming their full share of this growth. At the same time, the government is aware that economic growth by itself is not enough.

Women still remain clustered in traditionally female occupations such as teaching and nursing, clerical, sales and service work. If all the government did was to rely on the market as some in this House would prefer to do, we would see only a glacial, painfully slow change in the labour situation as it relates to women.

This government can do better. We must do better to recognize as the government does the continuing need to help women move into new growth areas. It recognizes that its own programs and services can help bring us closer to that goal.

The federal side has a number of innovative projects aimed specifically at addressing the needs of women. Since it is the hon. member for the riding of Quebec whose motion we are discussing, let me talk briefly about a couple of projects for women that are under way in her own province of Quebec.

Since last October, Rimouski has been home to an entrepreneurial training project. Women of all ages with business creation projects have been receiving the skills they need to create successful small businesses. The project has focused on the needs of women without sources of income.

(1330)

What is equally important is the team that has pulled this project together. The local Canada employment centre, the CEGEP de Rimouski and the group Ficelles, whose purpose is to ensure women's access to work, have all co-operated to make this dream a reality. It is consistent with our interest in encouraging self-employment as the way toward economic self-sufficiency.

In Montreal there have been a couple of projects. In one, women who are on unemployment have been receiving modern technological training and support to help them move back into

the workforce and into more highly skilled jobs. In the other, recent female immigrants have been trained as fibreglass mill operators.

These are examples in one province. There are many more in that province and there are many more all across the country. Our new programs for youth share this commitment to the needs of women. Youth Service Canada has been a real success story. In the lead site projects, the ones that tested the concepts beyond Youth Service Canada, 54 per cent of the participants are female.

Some projects were focused on issues of particular interest to women. For example, the Regina family service bureau ran a project that helped 10 young single mothers.

Employment programs and services are only one element of our work for women. Unemployment insurance is a program that continues to play an important role as we move toward a more active labour market policy. There are some elements of UI such as maternity and parental benefits that respond to the labour market reality faced by female workers.

To my friend from Yorkton—Melville and my friend from Edmonton Southwest, despite their professed beliefs it is important we have programs that help women respond to the labour market reality, programs such as maternity and parental benefits.

We do not have to go far back in time to find how this program has been adapted to the needs of women. We need only go back one year to 1994. The government decided to scale back UI benefits. However, in doing so it took into account the situation of people on low incomes. Almost 60 per cent of single parent families with children under 18 live on low incomes. Far too many are single mothers struggling to make ends meet.

It is that situation that caused the government to create the special 60 per cent dependency benefit rate for people who are supporting dependents on the basis of low income. This year people who earn an average \$408 a week or less and who's spouses get the child tax benefit or who support a dependent are eligible for this additional UI support. That provision makes a real difference for a single mother. Since the implementation of the dependency benefit rate over 192,000 claimants have qualified. The great majority, 148,000, were women.

The government recognizes the labour market needs of women extend well beyond the traditional programs and services, no matter how sensitive these services and programs. The National Association of Women and the Law stated in its appearance before the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development a year ago: "We recognize the growing importance of women in the labour force, but fail to recognize that women have children and women are primarily responsible for their care".

Supply

Child care is important. It was a concern of ours during the 1993 campaign. It is a need that we are addressing on three separate fronts.

(1335)

The government is moving ahead on its First Nations and Inuit child care initiative. The goal is to increase the level of services in those communities. There is so much more. A second front is a research and development component to give us more information in this critical area of child care.

I have pages of programs the government is working on. We are not there yet. We are working at it and I believe when we get there the women of this country and therefore this country as a whole will be the better and the richer for it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleague from Burin—St. George's is an outstanding parliamentarian, and he regularly demonstrates his skills when he takes the floor.

The thing I disapprove of is that his party and, to a certain extent, the hon. member for Burin—St. George's himself, talk out of both sides of their mouth. I would like to give an example, that of the Canada Labour Code reform and precautionary withdrawal from work.

I do not need to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the family unit is the most valuable asset of any country. In May 1994, the Bloc Québécois tabled a motion supported by the governing party, the Liberal Party of Canada, in order to raise the compensation for pregnant women to the 95 per cent level provided by the Quebec CSST. Right now, it stands at 60 per cent.

A discussion paper on the Canada Labour Code reform is being circulated at this time, and the Liberal Party of Canada did not include that motion, which it supported in May 1994, to give substantial assistance to pregnant women who must ask for precautionary withdrawal from work in order to carry their pregnancy to term and protect their unborn baby.

Like the rest of us, the hon. member for Burin—St. George's is certainly aware of the importance of the family unit, that is a wife, husband and children—the complet unit. The children will be the work force of tomorrow and will pay for our pensions. That natural asset of our country is now declining.

We moved a motion that the hon. member's party supported, but what we see and hear in the House today is just a lack of courage, and double talk, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the hon. member for Burin—St. George's is the one who will have to clarify his party's position. I hope he will set the record straight, because this is an important motion on the equality of women.

*Supply**[English]*

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, my French is so rusty these days that I will do the wise thing and talk to him in a language that I know a bit about. I will make a promise to him that I will get back to my long neglected French.

I thank him for his kind comments about my speech. I share very much his views on the importance of the family unit. I thought he articulated it very eloquently a moment ago and I salute him for that.

As to the motion he was talking about, I plead ignorance. I do not remember the details of it and I will not pretend that I do. He put his finger, and rightly so, on one of the many areas in which this government needs to move.

(1340)

I have always been appalled that remuneration has been on the basis of sex; that females have been getting lower wages for performing the same services. There are thousands of examples of that. I have been appalled that people are paid differently because they live in one region versus another. Two wrongs do not make a right. These disparities have to be corrected.

We are on the matter of women's issues today. I do not like the term. They are all our issues, but I know what is meant by the term.

The member flagged an issue that I pursue and will continue to pursue. The matter of the disparity of wages is untenable and we have to move to correct it as soon as possible.

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I do not appreciate or accept the tenor of the motion presented for debate by the hon. member for Quebec, I recognize and thank her for giving us the opportunity to talk about such an important aspect as the quality of the connection that Canadian women have to the social and economic infrastructure of Canadian society.

It is a critical topic. As one of the 50 some women elected to the House it is incumbent on me to do whatever I can to encourage our governments and our legislature to understand where that connection is and make it better.

In her motion the hon. member focuses specifically on the economic connection, the economic side of the connection that we as women have to Canadian society. We have to speak about both the economic and social support that we as women need if we are to participate fully and completely in Canadian society and offer a bettering of the society through skills, abilities and qualities we bring as women.

In understanding the connection between social and economic development I turn to September of last year when I had the opportunity as a member of the parliamentary delegation to the United Nations conference on population and development to

understand quite fully the impact development has on population.

We did a lot of very good work at the conferences that were the preliminary to those debates in Cairo to encourage an understanding of the impact development has on population management, more specifically to understand that when we talk about development we do and must talk about both social and economic development.

We played a very significant role in helping the world understand that it is the strong connections that women must have to both the social and economic supports that exist in a society that will in turn improve the development and the productivity of a nation and then in turn enhance and help manage population control.

We were essentially talking about development in developing nations. As I worked with and talked to colleagues from around the world I realized this debate is still going on in all developed nations. Canada is at a different level because of the hard and dedicated work of many Canadian women. When we think of the women who work so hard to get us recognized as persons not so very long ago, they helped move us to the position we are in now.

(1345)

I think of some of my friends. Doris Anderson worked outside the government sector with non-governmental organizations and as a publisher of a well-known women's magazine. I think of the work she has done. I think of Lucie Pépin, a friend and colleague, a former member of Parliament who has worked so hard on behalf of women's issues. All these women have brought us, as a developed nation, to a point that is different from those of the developing nations.

The conversations we had in Cairo focused on the need for women to commit, with development on the social side, to very basic things when it comes to health: access to tetanus, polio and tuberculosis cures and shots, access to clean water. Basic health measures are what they need.

When we were talking about education we were talking about access to primary school education. When we were talking about access to economic support we were talking about the basic notion that it was okay for women to work outside the confines of the defined home as we know it.

For us in the developed nation of Canada, we are talking about things of a different sort at a different level. It is not so much basic health issues but issues of research for women and the impact of breast cancer and the impact of heart disease.

When we are talking about education we are encouraging our young women to complete high school and post-secondary education. When we are thinking about other social aspects such as safety and comfort, not only in our streets but in our own homes, we are having to understand family violence and to

accept that it is not in any way, shape or form something that we want to be part of our society.

When we think specifically about our connections with the economic levers we are talking about women having access to financial supports. The government is looking at these things and working on them all. For the Bloc Quebecois to say that we are not is really a falsehood.

When we go back and think about safety and the need for women to have confidence they are supported in our society, we look at the measures the Minister of Justice has undertaken. Just recently he tabled a bill that will no longer allow drunkenness to be a defence, particularly in cases of rape. We will see tabled soon I am sure, considering the importance of support payments to single parents, most often women, some changes in that regard and those will be tabled in the near future.

Today, as we debate Bill C-41 in committee, I will be tabling an amendment to the bill that will ask, under the section where we are discussing restitution, that the courts turn their head to the loss of income and support that can occur in cases of family violence. It should recognize that restitution should be paid to women who have to leave their homes as a result of family violence and perhaps incur costs related to transportation, alternate forms of housing and day care, drug and dental requirements. I hope that members of the Bloc on the committee will support me on that amendment.

These are things the government is doing to make sure that Canadian women are connected and supported on the social side.

I know the Minister of Health is working very hard and diligently and has implemented a fresh start program for aboriginal communities which is very important.

When we think about education, by and large a provincial jurisdiction, as individual members of Parliament, women in particular, we have a strong role to play in making sure that our young women do and are encouraged to carry on to high school, college and university and to set their sights as far ahead of themselves as they possibly can so they do not get stuck in female ghettos, in typically female occupations.

One of the most important parts of my job is to meet with young people in my community, in the public schools and high schools, and talk to them about what a woman can be in our country.

(1350)

Very recently I attended the Daughters of Invention, where grade seven girls came together and spent a couple of days talking about science and research. As we were discussing role models and women, I asked them: "Back in 1867 when Confederation was discussed, do you think your grandmothers would

Supply

have voted for Canada or against Confederation?" They put their hands up, some yes and some no. I said: "Do you know what girls? Your grandmothers could not vote back then. They were not even considered persons". There was an embarrassing ah-ha. They did not realize that.

It was at that point I realized that my job as a member of Parliament is to make sure that optimism, I suppose to a certain extent that naivete, cannot continue, that they know that as females there are restrictions on them but that they can participate fully and equitably in our society.

When it comes to the economic side, there are many things we have to do. I can only say how strongly I support the employment equity legislation that encourages Canadian businesses to recognize the importance of having a broad mix of people in their organizations. We are not talking about quotas. We are talking about recognizing people for the skills and abilities they have and that they bring to an environment. It is legislation we are improving and that I strongly support.

With that, I see that my time has gone. There are so many things we can talk about. Again I thank the hon. member for giving us the opportunity to debate and share our ideas in this regard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague, who probably knows, whether there is a different treatment for pregnant women in a situation of precautionary withdrawal of work.

The Bloc Quebecois had proposed an amendment at the time of the last Labour Code revision in 1992 to authorize the federal government to make administrative agreements with any province that had a system providing better conditions than those provided for for women in the Canada Labour Code, in cases of precautionary withdrawal of work.

The Liberal Party, then in the opposition, had supported the amendment put forward by the Bloc. Now, we are about to revise the Labour Code. There is a paper from the Department of Labour circulating, but there is no provision in that paper for administrative agreements between the federal government and any province. That is what the amendment was all about; we were not referring to Quebec but to any province whatsoever, and those administrative agreements were along the lines of flexible federalism, I would imagine.

I would like to know if the hon. member will undertake to ask her government to include in the legislation provisions dealing with precautionary withdrawal of pregnant women in order to enable the federal government to make administrative agreements with any province that has better conditions than those provided for in the Canada Labour Code, since at least in the case of Quebec they are not as good as those provided for in the

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Quebec Labour Code. Is she agreeable to such a request and will she approach her government's labour minister about that?

[English]

Mrs. Stewart (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I am not completely familiar with the amendment to which the hon. member is referring. I will apprise myself of it.

I would agree and say that we have not come to the point where the salaries paid to women in the workplace are equal to those to men. That is something we are always conscious of, working toward and committed to.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. I saw her applaud the announcement made yesterday by the Secretary of State for the Status of Women regarding the elimination of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

I would like to ask the member how civil servants can ensure the transparency which, I think, the Council now provides. How can she guarantee that civil servants will implement without any bias the different policies which will be put forward? How, in fact, can the department act as both judge and jury? I would like her to explain this because it seemed to delight her yesterday.

(1355)

[English]

Mrs. Stewart (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I know a number of the women who for many years have participated on the Advisory Council for the Status of Women and say that we have appreciated the work they have done over the last number of years.

I believe that the announcement made by the minister was a good one. It essentially brings together disparate sectors that have been focusing on improving the status of women in the country in a consolidated effort. In a consolidated way we will be able to make significant progress in effort and on behalf of women with her announcement.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today to the motion introduced by my hon. colleague from Quebec. I commend her for introducing into the House a good discussion on the whole issue of equality. It is an issue that has a lot of interest in the country, one that a lot of people are concerned about.

One of the lessons of history is that personal struggle and achievement go hand in hand. In fact, I know that is true for many of us here. Sometimes the Canadian public feels that members of the House do not know what personal struggle is about. I know from speaking to many of my colleagues, and

from personal experience, that we do have personal histories of struggle and achievement.

It is important for many of us to realize that these issues are not just something to be debated in the House, but they are issues which all of humankind have struggled with for many years.

I would like to outline to my colleagues some of my personal background in this area. I am the oldest of seven children. My parents were not well off, I think poor would probably be an accurate word. If I wanted money I always had to earn it. I have worked since I was very young in the summers and weekends to have the money I wanted.

The day I left home when I was 18, my mother came home with my youngest brother and so the family kind of went on even though I was going on with my life. My parents were not able to help me with my education. I put myself through two university degrees. I was also widowed in my thirties. My husband died very suddenly, leaving me a single parent and sole support of the family.

I became a professional person, a lawyer, before there was any affirmative action and before there were any nice government programs to help women achieve equality. Many people who I know are very proud and very happy to have been able to make the achievements in their life on their own merit.

The subject of this debate today is how we can best achieve the kind of results we want from our life—

The Speaker: The hon. member, of course, will know that immediately following question period, we will return to debate and she will be given the floor.

It being 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members, pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today with pride and some dismay.

I am proud of the Minister of Finance who has proposed in this year's budget the most dramatic comprehensive changes in government since World War II.

I am proud to be part of a government that has met, and will continue to meet, the objectives necessary to wrestle the deficit and debt that are damaging the country to the ground.

My dismay has mounted over the past several weeks while I listen to the members of the third party refuse to join us on this

side of the House, however grudgingly, and working for the future prosperity of this beautiful country.

They ran on the concept of a new type of politics that does not follow the old partisan ritual and dogma. Why then are they voting no to the challenge we now face?

Why is their leader currently communing with the spiritual leader of the new right wing of the United States, being tutored in barbaric doctrines which slash seniors pensions and allow orphans to be institutionalized? Why is the leader of the third party not participating in this country's rebirth instead of observing the machinations of an evil, bitter monster to the south?

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[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, taxpayers in Quebec and Canada have lost confidence in the Canadian tax system. The underground economy is spreading. Tax accounts outstanding exceed \$6 billion, and in the case of the GST, \$1.3 billion.

Furthermore, the tax system is full of holes. Wealthy taxpayers and large corporations can afford to pay tax experts for advice on how to take advantage of tax loopholes. For instance, they can take advantage of the fact that Canada has signed at least 16 tax treaties with countries considered to be tax havens. Every year, ten of thousands of profitable businesses pay no taxes at all. Meanwhile, the Minister of Finance is letting individuals pay 65 per cent of the tax increases in his last budget, while family trusts will have to wait until 1999.

In spite of all this, the Minister of Finance still refuses to proceed with a complete overhaul of the tax system that would eliminate fiscal inequities.

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[English]

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1991 Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick was in a financial mess. It had a deficit of \$2.5 million and a debt of \$10 million. Like the federal government it desperately needed to get its financial house in order. The current president of the university, Ian Newbould, was recently quoted in *Maclean's* magazine as saying: "If we were a corporation we would have been in receivership".

In over three years that university has eliminated its debt and created a surplus of \$13 million. Clearly the goal of the university president was not to achieve a smaller deficit.

Instead, satisfaction would only come with no deficit and zero debt. The goal was achieved through responsible control.

The finance minister stood in this House and expected praise for a deficit prediction of \$25 billion. Some provinces, and universities such as Mount Allison, have become the national standard of fiscal responsibility. The minister needs to take a hard look at how the real world manages its finances and reflect on how he failed to measure up to the Canadian standard.

* * *

RURAL CHILD CARE

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farming is not a nine to five business. It involves early mornings, late nights and weekends, which most child care operations do not accommodate. As a result parents are forced to leave their children alone or take them along when they work with heavy machinery or livestock.

For every six deaths resulting from farm accidents, one of those victims is a child. Fifteen per cent of those hospitalized as a result of farm accidents are children under 16 years of age.

Last week was National Farm Safety Week. I would like to recognize the people and organizations who are working to find flexible, accessible and affordable solutions for rural child care, namely: the National Coalition for Rural Child Care; the Women's Institute; the Rural Development Institute of Brandon, Manitoba; and many others. I applaud their commitment and dedication to the safety of farm children.

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PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I speak today on behalf of our friends and colleagues of the federal public service. Several members of that employment sector are now entering a period of significant change and transition. As the governing body in this House we must fulfil our commitment to ensuring sensitivity, compassion and caring during this passage.

We have asked so much of our people and they will rise to the challenge. However, we must empower decision makers at the local level so they can do their jobs right to ensure that those affected by this change are treated fairly and with dignity and that the best possible course of action is determined one by one, according to the needs of each individual.

Those at the local level are the ones best able to determine how the changes we have asked for can be brought into effect. We must all do our part. I know this government will honour its commitment to ensuring fairness, compassion and flexibility at the local level for the betterment of our people and our nation.

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(1405)

CUBA

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Canada's unbroken diplomatic relationship with Cuba.

Canada and Cuba maintain a friendly and diverse relationship which includes political diplomacy, trade and commerce, scientific and economic co-operation, and tourism. In the area of fisheries, Cuba has supported our view on the need for measures to end high seas overfishing.

Cuba is a nation that is now in transition to a market economy, a nation with which we have significant trade, an area that we can and should expand upon. To enable Canadian businesses to compete for new economic opportunities in Cuba, I urge the Minister for International Trade to reinstate the \$30 million line of credit to Cuba so that Canadian companies can take advantage of it to increase Canada-Cuban trade.

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*[Translation]***CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, three years after the auditor general drew the attention of the government to what it costs taxpayers in Canada and Quebec to train a member of the armed forces reserve—90 per cent of what it costs to train a regular soldier—no steps have been taken to stop this wasteful spending.

In fact, the Canadian Reserve whose training is ineffective and inadequate, is the most expensive in the world after the one in Switzerland, which has no army. It will cost us a billion dollars again this year.

Ironically, the government decided to quietly get rid of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and save a paltry one million dollars, while the National Defence budget, which totals more than \$11 billion, was cut by less than 5 per cent this year.

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*[English]***JUSTICE**

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the people of Quesnel, British Columbia are outraged by our so-called justice system.

Last Sunday, Quesnel RCMP arrested a 19-year old man who, according to witnesses, dragged an elderly woman into his hotel room, held a knife to her throat and brutally raped her. When the woman's husband entered the scene, the rapist chased him down the hall and threatened him at knifepoint. The community hoped that justice would be served.

The elderly woman who is in what are supposed to be her golden years is in trauma therapy. The loving couple has been scarred forever. Imagine the shock Quesnel residents felt when this rapist was allowed back into the community on a petty \$1,000 bond.

Canadians deserve better. While our criminals are given free college tuition or are let go on token bonds to roam the streets, shattered lives are left to heal on their own. Meanwhile, the public continues to ask who the justice system works for, the victim or the criminal?

Will the justice minister please stop wasting time on pet projects and start working to put justice back into the justice system?

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FISHERIES

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are 50,000 people out of work in Atlantic Canada because of the collapse of our fishery. These 50,000 people were forced to turn to government assistance to help put food on the table.

During the election campaign, Liberals pledged that our government would support its fishermen, deal with foreign overfishing and help preserve the remaining fish stock. Over the past week, our government has come through on this commitment 100 per cent.

On behalf of my constituents, I commend our minister of fisheries for taking a strong stand against foreign overfishing, ensuring that the turbot does not go the way of the cod. Over the past week I have received faxes, phone calls, petitions and letters of support for the minister of fisheries. That support has been well founded.

Today foreign ships are no longer fishing on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. We are on the verge of negotiating stricter international rules.

Today I challenge all MPs to stand behind the minister as he continues to fight to protect and preserve the Canadian fishery.

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*[Translation]***FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC**

Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc member for Rimouski—Témiscouata and critic for the Department of Canadian Heritage toured the country to tell francophone communities that the Bloc was with them all the way.

But Tuesday, the honeymoon was over when she accused the francophones of this country of being sell-outs.

How embarrassing for the Bloc to have one of its members make such accusations. Talk about double talk. At last the Bloc is showing its true colours to francophone communities.

But when Paul Piché and Laurence Jalbert made it clear they were separatists, after receiving financial assistance from Canadian Heritage for the production of records and videos, did you hear any federalists insulting them?

(1410)

Not at all, and it goes to show how open-minded federalists are, and we expected Bloc members would show the same respect for the opinions of others.

On behalf of the francophones of this country, I ask that the member of the Bloc withdraw, in this House, the slanderous term she used.

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[English]

FORUM FOR YOUNG CANADIANS

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last evening I had the pleasure of meeting many participants of the Forum for Young Canadians. This yearly forum has once again brought together high school students from all across the country to learn firsthand the workings of our federal Parliament.

This year Etobicoke—Lakeshore is well represented by Melissa Jenkins of Bishop Allen Academy and Raphael Pacquing of Father John Redmond High School. These two students travelled to Ottawa to exchange ideas and explore their interests in the process of government, the media and the role of members of Parliament.

I commend the efforts of all who have contributed to the success of this year's forum. May these youths return to their communities across Canada with the knowledge this government is working hard to ensure a strong and prosperous country for future generations.

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[Translation]

QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the English speaking Canadian intelligentsia met yesterday in Toronto, at the invitation of the C.D. Howe Institute, and indulged in a fit of Quebec-bashing the likes of which have seldom been seen.

These great democrats, full of *Canadian* patriotism, suggested that Quebecers be made to suffer in order to prevent a vote in favour of sovereignty. This idea was not only sanctioned but added to by political science expert Stéphane Dion, who suggested that "the more it will hurt, the more support for sovereignty will weaken".

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Since Stéphane Dion is now a freelancer working as an advisor to the Prime Minister of Canada, Quebecers gather that his statement reflects the position of the federal government.

I trust that Quebecers will, as they have done throughout their history, stand tall and defend their right to exist to the face of the world.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL RED BOOK

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker:

The red book full of promises
That we could count upon
If Liberals were elected
All our problems would be gone.
There'd be a kinder Parliament
With Liberals at the helm
And social programs all survive
We'd have no fears from them.

The budget's now behind us
And plain for all to see
That promises don't mean a lot
Without integrity.
Integrity you cannot buy
There is not much that's dearer
For each and every Liberal
Must look into the mirror.

But one lonely Liberal
Could not have said it better
Liberals have taken the famous red book
And stuffed it in the shredder!

The Speaker: I would appeal to all hon. members not to use props or to rip up props during the statements.

* * *

RETIREMENT ALLOWANCES

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP): Mr. Speaker, information acquired through access to information reveals that federal deputy ministers are receiving special retirement allowances of up to \$30,000 per year on top of their regular pensions.

The Treasury Board document points out this additional benefit to federal deputy ministers is equal to 2 per cent of the retiree's average salary during their six best years. This bonus is multiplied by the number of years a deputy minister works to a maximum of 10 years. The document states: "There is no minimum vesting period and no contributions are required from the deputy ministers".

The government has just cut 45,000 public servants from the payroll. There are also substantial cuts to agriculture and social programs. In view of these facts, will the finance minister and his Liberal government immediately rescind this abominable perk, this golden parachute enjoyed by richly paid deputy ministers? Or, will the highest paid civil servants continue to be protected and insulated by the Liberals from the harsh realities others in Canada with lesser incomes are now facing?

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(1415)

*[Translation]***LEADER OF ACTION DÉMOCRATIQUE DU QUÉBEC**

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Parti Action Démocratique in Quebec had announced that his party would participate in the regional commissions by saying, and I quote: “We can only rejoice over the fact that our conditions have been agreed to. We are happy to contribute to an improvement of the process. We are taking a constructive approach. We hope that many people will take part in the consultation”.

Three months later, he said and I quote: “I think that it is not necessarily clear in the minds of all the citizens who came to participate, because if they had been told at the beginning of the consultation that they were wasting their time and that everything had been decided in advance, there might not have been 55,000 participants”. The leader of the Parti Action Démocratique is experiencing a rude political awakening. He has realized, but too late, that he has been manipulated by the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

*[English]***THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY**

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was amazed to read in the Toronto *Star* that Ontario Tories are turning to the want ads to find candidates to run in this year’s provincial election. The add which ran in at least three Ontario newspapers is seeking Conservatives with common sense.

Over the past several months Mike Harris has been touring Ontario, promising to cut personal income tax by 30 per cent, promising to bring a balanced budget in four years and not to touch policing, education or health care. Everyone knows with any common sense that the numbers do not add up.

Mark Mullins, Harris’ chief number cruncher, stated: “I’m not a member of the Conservative Party. The last thing I need is for anyone to say here is the guru behind the package”.

Is it possible that Mike Harris’ policies are so far out that not even Conservatives with common sense can support them?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[Translation]***QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY**

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at a forum in Toronto hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute and attended by the chairman of Quebec’s No committee, Michel Bélanger, one of the Prime Minister’s constitutional advisors, Stéphane Dion, said that the worse the economic situation gets, the more Quebecers will change their minds and reject sovereignty.

My question is for the Prime Minister. How can the Prime Minister let one of his constitutional advisors, namely Stéphane Dion, say that the more it hurts, the less support there will be for sovereignty?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dion is not a constitutional advisor. Furthermore, as everyone knows, I do not spend a lot of time discussing the constitution these days. I am trying to address the economic problems in Canada and Quebec.

I got elected by telling people that I did not want to talk about the constitution. I certainly do not have a constitutional advisor; I do not want to talk about it. I read in the newspaper that he wants to give the Privy Council advice on other things. Personally, I hope that the question will be asked clearly and very soon so that we can stop talking about this and deal with the real problems affecting the population.

I read this article that speculates on what I should do if the Yes side wins in Quebec. We do not even know when the referendum will be held or what the question will be. I am confident that they will lose, so I will not waste my time talking about this.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is surprising, to say the least, that the Prime Minister, who claims not to be interested in constitutional issues, allocated an additional \$7 million or so to his own office so it could set up an operational unit to talk about the constitution during the Quebec referendum.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gauthier: As a preamble to my second question, I will simply remind him that Stéphane Dion is still under contract to his office until March 31. I hope that he at least knows what is going on in his own office.

How can the Prime Minister reconcile the comments made by his advisor, Stéphane Dion, with his own statement that he would respect Quebecers’ democratic decision on their political future?

Oral Questions

(1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people in my office do not talk about the constitution but about how to prevent separation. It is not the same thing. And, in order to prevent separation, all we are asking the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois is to finally make a decision and ask the population a clear question: Do you want to separate from Canada? And Quebecers will say No.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister refuses to dissociate himself from Mr. Dion's comments, I must conclude that he endorses them.

I ask the following: Since he refuses to publicly dissociate himself from Stéphane Dion's comments, are we to understand that the Prime Minister's referendum strategy has gone from scaring Quebecers into saying No in 1980 to hurting them into saying No in 1995?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, what we are doing is telling Quebecers that, with a very good federal government, they will stay in Canada. That is why we tabled, for example, a budget that was very well received by Quebecers. We hope that the Quebec government will stop talking about separation and committees, deal with Quebecers' real problems such as economic problems and job creation, and bring down a budget which addresses Quebecers' real problems, as a government must do.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The official opposition questioned the heritage minister on several occasions to find out how much will actually be cut from the CBC's budget over the next three years. Only two weeks ago, the minister was still denying that any decisions had been made concerning the corporation's financing.

How can the Minister of Canadian Heritage reconcile his statement with what the Vice-President of Radio-Canada television, Michèle Fortin, said yesterday when she announced that 750 positions would have to be slashed in the CBC's French network to accommodate the cuts totalling \$350 million over three years, imposed by the heritage minister?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I checked the information the hon. member is referring to. Radio-Canada, my source, confirmed that no cuts were announced. I assume this means no staff cuts or layoffs have been decided. It is only natural for Ms. Fortin to share her concerns with union reps when she meets with them, but no layoffs have been announced by Radio-Canada.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my philosophy professor used to say when he got a flimsy answer like this to a sensible and pertinent question: "Swine have no appreciation for pearls".

My second question—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: My hon. colleagues, we have all had good professors in our school days, but I do not think they should be quoted so literally in this place. I would ask the hon. member to please withdraw his last sentence at least.

Mr. Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I will gladly comply with your request and withdraw my statement.

My second question is for the same minister. How can he explain the scope of the alleged cuts to the CBC's French network, when it is so successful that its viewing shares can be as much as three times larger than those of the English network? Is it the minister's new cultural policy to penalize those who succeed?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I gather that our colleague did not like my answer. I am just stating the facts, as provided and confirmed by Radio-Canada, but he refuses to hear the truth. I too had good masters and good professors. My grandfather, who was born in Sainte-Flore, Quebec, used to say: "When you let the ewe out of the barn, it comes and relieves itself on your doorstep".

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

(1425)

The Speaker: Now that we have heard quotes from Shakespeare, a professor and a grandfather, I hope we can hear the hon. members speak for themselves.

* * *

*[English]***HEALTH CARE**

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last night in Saskatoon the Prime Minister made several inconsistent statements concerning the national health system.

He said the government would maintain current medicare standards and yet federal funding would be tied to economic growth and would drop as a percentage of GDP.

There is no way current standards can be maintained under this plan, especially since the OECD estimates that Canada's health care costs will double over the next 20 years.

How does he explain this inconsistency and how will current standards be maintained given increased demand and reduced federal funding?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had read the whole speech, I indicated growth in health expenditures has stopped in the last two years and there is already a start in reduction.

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The policies we are developing with the provinces at this time are doing exactly what we had hoped, to stop the growth of expenditures. With the growth in the economy of 4.5 per cent last year and about 3 per cent this year, eventually we will reduce it from around 10 per cent to around 9 per cent, where we were before.

That will be very competitive. It is a sign that we can have comprehensive and universal health care, meeting the five conditions of the Canada Health Act in a reasonable fashion. We will achieve our goal. We will keep medicare. We will not scrap medicare like the Reform Party suggests.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, wherever costs are lower it is because the standards are not being met right now. It is a sign of things to come.

Experts tell us health care costs are rising by about 50 per cent and the economy is only growing by 4 per cent. The federal government is planning to reduce funding from 10 per cent of GDP to 8 per cent. That means less federal money for medicare, no matter how you look at it.

I have seen the confusion created at the provincial level in Saskatchewan when governments said one thing and did another.

Is the government planning to offload medicare funding on to the provinces by putting a cap on Canada social transfers?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are planning to make sure that in working with the provinces we will control the cost of medicare so that we can keep universal free medicare for all Canadians.

As indicated, the collaboration between the Government of Canada and the provinces has already seen the result that the public side of health care did not increase last year. It has started to decrease. If we all use the discipline needed we will go back to 9 per cent of GDP and we will still have the best medicare.

We will not be trapped in the private sector nets that exist in the United States, where it spends 15 per cent of its GDP. In Canada it is universal, free, costing around 10 per cent now.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we should ask a taxpayer whether it is free.

The Prime Minister speaks in glowing terms about preserving our national health care standards. I will tell the Prime Minister what is really happening.

In Manitoba there is a waiting period of 61.7 weeks, way over one year, for hip replacement surgery. The national standard is 11.3 weeks. Where is the performance? How are we meeting our current commitments? What good are national standards if the provinces cannot deliver on them?

Is the government prepared to bring the Canada Health Act in line with the 1990s and give the provinces real control over medicine delivery and health care financing?

(1430)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there are problems in some provinces. The performance is not the same everywhere. In our system medicare—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): It is administered by the provincial governments. If they had a better government in Manitoba perhaps they could do better on that score.

* * *

[Translation]

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The federal government decided on the sly to dissolve the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, an organization that has always been recognized for its independence of the government and its strong stands in advancing the cause of women.

How can the Prime Minister justify the government's decision to abolish the Advisory Council on the Status of Women by handing over its responsibilities to women's organizations that are already in difficulty?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, women's councils across the country were telling us that they were in a better position to do political analyses than people appointed by order in council.

We hear the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois say that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, which was appointed by the government, is less objective than organizations such as FRAPPE or other organizations not working directly under an order in council. This is why we changed the system.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is not the opinion of women's groups in Quebec. At least not what I heard yesterday.

My supplementary question is again for the Prime Minister. How can the government claim that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women was meeting needs that no longer exist, when women continue to be the heads of the poorest families in Canada, when they earn less than a man for equal work, when they are the primary victims of violence and when they are always in the most vulnerable jobs?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the government decided to do was to abolish the order in council positions that are traditionally characterized as patronage positions.

As the hon. member will know, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women named people by order in council. There was a question put by women's groups across the country to which we responded. That question was: How can a person on the advisory council be at arm's length from the government when they are in fact appointed by the government?

It is for that reason we have taken the research funds and the funds that were previously paid to finance the order in council appointments and have ploughed that money back into research, which will be made available to women's groups across the country so that they can set their priorities instead of having them set by order in council appointees.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Jeffries report identified critical leadership shortfalls in the Canadian forces. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the report's lament that soldiers are constantly asked to "do more, with less for less".

General Jeffries has been honest and courageous in saying what the minister seems ready to ignore: that he and his officials demand more but give less.

Will the minister acknowledge that it is the responsibility of good leadership, including himself, to allocate priorities and commitments according to resources, and that this responsibility has been neglected?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after question period yesterday I received a copy of the memorandum General Jeffries had sent out and I went through it rather meticulously. Most of the contents of that memorandum paralleled the recommendations and the commentary of the special joint committee on defence to which the hon. member was a signatory.

On page 49 of the parliamentary report the committee said that morale was not a problem because of poor leadership. The hon. member now wants us to believe that the opinion he had with all the rest of the members some four months ago has somehow been changed.

The fact of the matter is that the committee of which he was a prominent member made a lot of recommendations. All those recommendations have been accepted and all the questions that General Jeffries raised are being dealt with in a full and consistent manner.

(1435)

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ with the minister that all the recommendations have been accepted. Quite a number have not been accepted or instituted.

General Jeffries noted:

The difference between what is necessary and what is affordable is made up by people, people who are required to deploy more frequently, perform more taskings, work longer hours, take more risks.

He concluded that operational capability—

The Speaker: Order. I find today that the questions are really a little long and so are the answers. Would the hon. member please put his question directly.

Mr. Frazer: Mr. Speaker, having received this advice, will the minister ignore it, as he did in the case of the airborne regiment, or take action now to avoid what the report referred to as "a hollow army and burnt out soldiers?"

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to impinge on the goodwill of the House by reading yet another section from the same memorandum but I feel compelled to do so.

General Jeffries states in the memorandum that despite some of the formidable list of dissatisfiers, morale remains for the most part high. He goes on to embellish that. I think that is good enough.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. On January 18, the minister, in reply to a request made by his counterpart in Quebec, refused to explicitly prohibit female circumcision and other genital mutilation, under the pretext that the current provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada sufficed.

Why has the Minister of Justice refused to explicitly add female circumcision and other genital mutilation to the Criminal Code of Canada, as requested by Quebec's justice minister, Quebec's human rights commission and all of the experts in the field?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to point out that opinions on this controversial issue are divided. In fact, according to an article in today's *Le Devoir*, Quebec's council on the status of women does not necessarily agree with the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women on this issue.

The Quebec council believes that amending the Criminal Code could inadvertently drive the practice even further underground and the federal government agrees. We are more in favour of trying to heighten awareness in communities with a

Oral Questions

tradition of performing female circumcisions and genital mutilation.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Justice continue to delude himself that the Criminal Code, as it stands, suffices when a gynecologist, Claude Fortin, states that he had to perform surgery on nine Canadian women to treat genital mutilations and that no lawsuit was ever filed against those who committed these barbarous acts?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fewer than two weeks ago in Toronto I met with the advisory council created by the Attorney General of Ontario on this subject.

Twenty-five women from the communities most affected by the issue are preparing a report on the question with specific recommendations on the issue of criminalization. Their present view is that an amendment to the Criminal Code is not appropriate because it will drive the practice further underground and make it more difficult for us to punish it when it is found.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the commitment of the government to prosecute and punish this criminal misconduct when it is uncovered. However, I must say there are people very familiar with the issue who believe very strongly that it is not in the interest of that cause to make amendments to the Criminal Code as suggested.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign in Manitoba, the Prime Minister said: "The little guy from Shawinigan will look after the interests of the little guy in Canada".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hooppner: I have a constituent who has a shipment of over \$200,000 worth of sunflower seeds in jeopardy due to the Montreal dock workers strike.

(1440)

Now that he is the big guy in Ottawa, what immediate action will the Prime Minister take to provide transportation for this product to Halifax so that this little processor will not be forced into bankruptcy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Parliament acted very rapidly yesterday in the case of the port of Vancouver. The port was completely closed.

The problem in Montreal is of a different nature. It does not call for legislation at this time and the Minister of Labour is looking into the matter.

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): That answer will not put food on the little processor's table, Mr. Speaker.

Negotiations in the railways are a disaster in waiting. Once again farmers may be called upon to—

Mr. Speaker: I ask colleagues on a supplementary question for perhaps a sentence and then to put the question.

Mr. Hooppner: Will the Prime Minister immediately ask for a mandatory mediation-arbitration process with binding final offer arbitration as a last resort?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had the opportunity to explain very clearly the difference between these labour disputes. We also took a first step, with the support of the opposition parties, towards the settlement of the conflict affecting west coast ports.

As for railways, negotiations are taking place today with Canadian Pacific. The situation at the Montreal harbour is completely different and I proposed a mediator to the two sides.

As I said yesterday, each situation must be reviewed on its own merits to ensure that an appropriate solution is found. As a government, our goal is to have the two sides agree to negotiate.

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage just indicated to the House that no cuts had been announced at Radio-Canada.

Will the minister confirm his earlier answer to the effect that no cuts will be made to Radio-Canada next year?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's logic is astounding. To say that I have no confirmation of any cuts is not at all the same as saying that there will be no cuts.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a second very logical question. How does the Minister of Canadian Heritage explain the fact that Radio-Canada announced yesterday that 750 jobs would be eliminated? I suppose that was mere speculation.

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be discreet, but he did not listen to my last answer. I already answered that question a few minutes ago. I explained that discussions had taken place at Radio-Canada, but that there was no—

Oral Questions

Should I quote another proverb to keep the hon. members quiet?

Some hon. members: Yes, let us hear about the grandfather.

Mr. Dupuy: My grandfather, who was born in Sainte-Flore—

Some hon. members: Ha! Ha!

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

I see the budget and all the changes that flow from it as a necessary but risky exercise. We inherited a government weakened by debt and we have to further downsize it in order to get rid of that debt.

Could the minister assure us that the downsized government and its programs will contain the seeds, the foundations for strong federal government in the future?

(1445)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I would like to congratulate the member for the way in which he has articulated his question. The budget sought to deal with those weaknesses in what is otherwise a very strong economy.

As a result, we increased substantially the fairness of the tax system. We are restructuring government to make it smaller and smarter. We are putting the deficit on a permanent downward track. We have reaffirmed our inflation targets. We have given the government credibility. For the first time a Canadian government has hit its targets and we have put the debt to GDP ratio on a permanent downward target.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday my question regarding the Pérez affair was brushed off because it was deemed to be a matter of the previous administration.

We must remember that this involves two individuals who are currently members of the other place as well as the president and chairman of Canada Post so the issue is very current.

The government promised openness and honesty. I cannot for the life of me figure out why the Prime Minister would not ask the ethics commissioner to clear the air. Why will he not?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that it is not within the jurisdiction of the ethics counsellor. We had asked a committee of the House to look into the question of lobbying and so on. It made its report today with amendments. It will be given to another committee of the House to look at the code of conduct for members of Parliament and senators.

This has to be decided by the members themselves, not by the government, because this affects the conduct of the members of the Senate and the members of the House of Commons. It is not for the government to dictate to members of Parliament what to do. Members of Parliament are mature and competent enough to give themselves guidelines. The member will be invited to participate if he has views to share.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is now the third time that we have asked for a response or a study or an investigation by the ethics counsellor. The answer we have received each time is: “No, no, no”.

If the Prime Minister will only authorize the ethics counsellor to investigate when it is safe, when and who is going to investigate controversial issues like this one for which Canadians demand an answer?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning, it is in relation to a situation that occurred when we were not in government. I also said that the question of the conduct of members of Parliament is a matter that is vested with the House of Commons. We will be asking a committee of the House to report on that and the hon. member can deal with this problem.

The government of today does not have to respond to what happened in previous administrations.

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[*Translation*]

IRVING WHALE

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. The minister told us yesterday, with regard to the hull of the *Irving Whale*, and I quote: “—we did have an electronic inspection done last June”. Our information, however, is that the inspection was a sonar side scan. This inspection permitted only a partial check of the hull using an inaccurate procedure. A real electronic inspection would have revealed the solidity of the welding and the state of structural cracks in the barge.

Is the minister going to be satisfied with a partial study, which does not permit any conclusions to be drawn on the real solidity of the hull and is she prepared to assume responsibility for any spill that may occur during refloating?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the agreement of the House, I would like to table the *Irving Whale* sidescan sonar survey which was conducted between the June 12 and 15, 1994.

Yesterday the member claimed that no survey had been done. In fact, last night at 5.30 we sent a copy of the survey to her office. I would like to read a portion of the survey to her.

The sidescan sonar portion of the survey was performed by the Environmental Marine Geology Subdivision of the Atlantic Geoscience Centre, Geological Survey of Canada using a Simrad MS992 dual frequency (120 and 330 kHz) sidescan sonar; and a GeoAcoustics SE880—

(1450)

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, we already have this study, this report. The system is not accurate.

Will the minister acknowledge, finally, that there is some controversy surrounding her decision, with, contrary to what she claims, a number of people, including four experts in ship salvage and a scientific expert from her own department expressing serious doubts about her decision?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following the requests by members who have made a number of unfounded accusations up to now, it was I who provided her yesterday with the results of the three-day study.

I am not a scientist, but I have much greater faith in the Geological Survey of Canada than in the politics of the hon. member across the floor, who, to date, has not read any report or accepted any analysis and has even refused to read the documents I provided the House on this matter last year.

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*[English]***CROW RATE**

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, farmers need clarification from the minister of agriculture as to who the Crow phase out payment is intended to benefit. Is it intended to benefit landowners or is it intended to benefit farmers?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister of agriculture who is presently out west talking to a wide number of farm organizations, I will take the hon. member's questions as notice.

The package that was announced in the budget to provide assistance to farmers with the phase out of the WGTA is designed to ensure that the investment can continue to be made for developing a new agricultural industry in western Canada. In this way agriculture can diversify and provide more value added products. That is the criteria the minister of agriculture will use. As he always does, he will use good judgment and good common sense.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on February 27, 1995 a departmental paper said the phase out money would go to landowners to help compensate for the loss of land value.

The next day the agriculture minister was quoted as saying that he was open to the possibility of encouraging provincial governments to pass the payment on to land renters.

The minister seems confused. Is the payment meant to compensate for the loss in land value or to help compensate for the extra freight cost? Farmers need an answer on this.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the hon. member's question is a little bit confused.

As I just explained, the minister of agriculture indicated that he is going to discuss this with a wide variety of farm organizations, which is what he is doing today, and to provide those kinds of answers. He made his position very clear.

We want to ensure that the compensation package is used in the most effective way possible to enhance the development and the reorganization of western agriculture so it can continue to offer a major base of economic growth in western Canada.

* * *

INTERNET

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry. Ernst Zundel, a convicted Nazi holocaust denier, and other Zundels of the world, intend to use Internet technology to spread direct propaganda.

What action can the minister take, first, to regulate the Internet from being used to spread hate propaganda, and second, will Internet users be made accountable?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the propaganda perpetrated by people like Ernst Zundel is as unacceptable on the Internet medium as it is in any other.

We deplore the fact that this kind of material exists in our society. The Information Highway Advisory Council is cur-

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rently studying whether our existing laws are adequate to deal with problems such as those that arise under the Internet.

(1455)

We will be consulting officials of the Department of Justice. I expect their recommendations will guide us in making determinations on what additional legislative action, if any, is required.

* * *

[Translation]

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

On December 14, in reply to a question about some land in Vancouver belonging to the Squamish band which the federal government has been leasing, the minister said the following: "I made arrangements to inform the band that future payments after this fiscal year should cease and desist".

Will the minister confirm that the lease payments which already cost Canadian taxpayers \$26 million have in fact "ceased and desisted", as she promised us on December 14, since officials from her own department say the opposite is true?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): I can assure the hon. member that, when I answered that question, we had informed the band in question that, after the end of the calendar year, we would not pay them one penny more. And our position on this issue is firm.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, accountants in Canada are in an uproar. The budget proposes to make all professional income statements due at the end of December rather than throughout the year. Accounting costs will skyrocket because of the need for overtime and extra staff at year end. These extra costs will be passed on to the professionals.

Had the Minister of Finance consulted with accountants and professionals on this matter?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year we had consulted with many Canadians on all of the issues that were in the budget.

The hon. member undoubtedly knows that provided professionals the opportunity to defer, for one full year, income otherwise taxable. It gave them a substantial advantage over other Canadians.

Given the government's commitment to making sure that the taxation system is fair and that all Canadians pay their fair share, we closed that loophole.

The Speaker: Now to single questions. The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

* * *

[Translation]

STAY IN SCHOOL PROGRAM

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development or for anyone who would be willing to give me an answer. It concerns the Stay in School job program which was introduced five years ago for the benefit of young people still in school. Its goal is to directly discourage young people from dropping out of school. Groups which are interested in this issue and which try to encourage young people heard recently that the program would be discontinued.

I would like to hear from the government itself whether it is true that the program will be dropped.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development has just left the House. He will return in a few minutes, and could perhaps answer the hon. member at three o'clock or the next time he is in the House.

* * *

[English]

MEDICARE

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, who yesterday was in Saskatchewan talking about medicare.

At the same time in Saskatchewan, members of the medicare community who had been involved in the fight to implement it over 30 years ago, including former Premier Allan Blakeney, were sounding warning bells for Canadians. Mr. Blakeney in particular said that by eliminating specific funding to the provinces in favour of reduced block transfers with few strings attached will result in a patchwork medical insurance system with different standards in different provinces.

How can the government continue to claim it is defending the principles of medicare when four of the sculptures of medicare are telling us these reforms are going to lead to a patchwork?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if these four sculptures, as he called them, had waited

Speaker's Ruling

until this morning, they would not have had to hold a press conference because I stated very clearly that medicare will remain as it is.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

In light of recent press reports, both domestically and internationally, reporting favourably on Canada's economy, could the minister tell the House why the economic indicators are looking so good?

(1500)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member undoubtedly knows because she follows this very closely, our growth is up. We are leading the G-7. Our productivity record is superb. Our inflation is very low.

Undoubtedly she is referring to more recent indicators. The composite leading indicator in February was up by 0.5 per cent. In January it was up by 0.6 per cent. Undoubtedly she was referring to the fact that our manufacturing shipments in January were up by 28 per cent over last year.

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*[Translation]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I nearly forgot to ask this important question. I would like the hon. government House leader to tell us about the business planned for the next few days.

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, as announced earlier, we will have an opposition day.

On Monday the House will consider Bill C-73 respecting borrowing authority followed by Bill C-68 respecting firearms. Tuesday will be an opposition day again.

On Wednesday the House will consider second reading of Bill C-72 regarding intoxication and when this is completed we will return to the business of Monday at the point it was left off.

Thursday will be another opposition day, the last in the present supply period, which means the House will be asked at the end of the day to vote on final supplementary estimates and interim supply.

On Friday we will begin the second reading stage of the budget implementation bill which we had intended to introduce today but whose introduction has been delayed for technical reasons.

I would like to express thanks to the opposition parties for their co-operation in facilitating discussion and decision last night on the bill to enable work to resume at the port of Vancouver. This attitude on their part is certainly appreciated.

* * *

*[Translation]***PRIVILEGE**

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT—SALVAGING OF THE *IRVING WHALE*—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: My colleagues, yesterday, March 15, the hon. Leader of the Opposition rose on a question of privilege relating to an exchange that had occurred March 14 during question period between him and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment. Having heard from both parties, the Chair undertook to review the situation and the records of the original exchange and to return to the House. I am now ready to rule on the matter.

[English]

I have carefully reviewed the comments from both hon. members. I thank them for their interventions. With regard to the basic differences of opinion that exist between them I must conclude this is a dispute as to facts or interpretation of facts. As such, it is a matter of debate and does not constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

However, on careful review of the records of the original exchange, the Chair has found some troubling anomalies. As I see it, it is these anomalies to which the hon. Leader of the Opposition takes exception and it is here that the Chair must take action to grant him redress.

[Translation]

Let me review the sequence of events which leads me to this conclusion. The original exchange on March 14 took place in French. It was taped and transcribed; the transcription was edited; the edited transcript was, as usual, distributed to the intervenors for review. The Office of the Deputy Premier Minister reviewed the transcript as usual and submitted, as is its right, two suggested changes to the blues. However, in the view of the Chair, these suggested changes ought not to have been accepted nor printed as the official record for they constitute a substantive difference to the original spoken words of the hon. member. To further complicate matters, these changes appear in the French *Hansard* but are not reflected in the English version which is, instead, a literal translation of the original spoken word.

Supply

(1505)

Therefore, to correct these anomalies, I have instructed my officials to print a corrigendum in today's *Hansard* so that both the French and the English version of the March 14 exchange will faithfully reflect the original spoken words of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

[*English*]

I have asked the Clerk of the House to ensure that the editors of *Hansard* adhere strictly to the long established criteria in determining what changes are accepted when members submit suggestions for changes when they return their blues.

I trust this remedial action will close this matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]**SUPPLY**

ALLOTTED DAY—ECONOMIC EQUALITY OF WOMEN

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Calgary North.

I would ask the hon. member for Roberval to withdraw what he said.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish you would tell me what you want me to withdraw. I did not have the impression I made an intervention.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I can check the blues, but I also heard you here, when you used a word we are not in the habit of using in this House.

Mr. Gauthier: Madam Speaker, I was simply making a reference, strictly off mike, to the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I can check the blues. If the words do not appear, I will apologize.

Mr. Gauthier: Madam Speaker, I would appreciate it if you would check the blues.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when you check the blues of the proceedings, perhaps I may suggest two points the Chair may wish to consider. First of all, when a parliamentarian says that another parliamentarian has, and I quote: "the right to lie", this reflects on the parliamentarians who, if this is true, did in fact lie, and of course we do not have the right to accuse a parliamentarian of doing so.

However, this also challenges the decision made earlier by the Chair with respect to a difference of opinion that existed, because saying that another parliamentarian allegedly had the right to lie implies that he or she had been given that right by someone else. In this case, the person who ruled on the matter happens to be the Speaker of this House, so the hon. member opposite has in fact challenged the decision of the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The blues will be checked, and I will get back to you as soon as they are available. The hon. Opposition Whip, on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Madam Speaker, since you are going to check the blues, perhaps you could check yesterday's blues as well, since the Deputy Prime Minister stated here in the House that she had not suggested any corrections in *Hansard*, and this did not appear in today's *Hansard*. I assume everyone heard her, since the Minister of Transport even applauded and expressed his support. Some things appear in the blues and some do not. This is appalling. Sometimes it is enough to give you the blues, Madam Speaker.

(1510)

[*English*]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Madam Speaker, this has to be one of the most interrupted speeches that I have ever had the pleasure of giving. This speech actually started over an hour ago and I had about two minutes to begin, so it is kind of hard to get a flow of thought when one is off again, on again. Perhaps I could start from the top and get through it this time without any interruptions.

The lesson of history is one of personal struggle leading to achievement. This has been very true for many of us in the House. I know of a member opposite who came from another country, did not know any English, started out by waiting tables and now is a member of the House. There are many such stories. I shared a bit earlier the kind of struggles I have gone through.

Many of us have become contributing members of society, business and professional people, helping others making a life for ourselves. Many of us have done this before, these kinds of affirmative action programs, these kinds of let us give people equality movements even started.

Canadians are able and willing to make it on their own merits. We have a very high level of merit. There are many unsung heroes. We will not see them on public platforms. They will not be getting any awards but they have been decent, honest, hard working citizens caring for each other, above and beyond the call of duty to hold out a hand of help and encouragement to others. We need to start judging success on the standards by which many Canadians judge themselves. Many Canadians judge success on what they have been able to give as individuals, not what they have been able to get.

Canadians have figured out what most of us figured out a long time ago, that life is not fair. There is a saying that if you would

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only accept the fact that life is hard it would be so much easier for you. We continually have people who should know better standing up in the House and saying we have to make things easier for people. We have to make things fairer. Canadians know life is what we make it.

We are talking today about the notion of equality. Equality is essentially fairness and impartiality. That is what the dictionary says. Government cannot make life fair. Parliament cannot create fairness any more than it can legislate goodness or compassion.

Calvin Coolidge, a former president of the United States, said: "The people cannot look to legislation generally for success. Industry, thrift and character are not conferred by act or resolve. Government cannot relieve from toil. It can provide no substitute for the rewards of service. It can of course care for the defective and recognize distinguished merit. The normal must care for themselves. Self-government means self-support".

Does this mean we should find unfairness and discrimination acceptable? Of course not, and we do not. It is not government that helps us to act fairly and impartially. This must come from an act of decision by ourselves as individuals.

Government is really just us. Government is part of us. It is something we create as a society. It is a reflection especially in a democracy of what we want for ourselves. That is why we choose representatives from us to carry out our wishes. Somehow there is a feeling that government should create the kind of ethic that is not otherwise present.

(1515)

There are things we can and should do as individuals to act more fairly and more impartially. We should do those but it is not something that can be legislated.

Canadians want to see people treated as individuals. We are significant in and of ourselves because we are us, so to speak. We do not have to gain significance because of how we relate in a group. We are significant as ourselves, not as something that is labelled, not because we are women or because we are vertically challenged or because we have more pigment in our skins than some other people. Those things are not relevant.

What is relevant is what is in our hearts, what we are capable of, how we strive to achieve the things that are important to us. That is what is significant. We need to realize that is the sort of self-reliance and desire for excellence that should be promoted.

There seems to be a feeling in this country that somehow somebody owes us something, that we are entitled to the things that for centuries we have struggled to achieve. Now they are owed to us and must be delivered to us. This is not practical. It is not common sense. It flies in the face of every experience in human history.

Some of these notions have been tried in other countries. In the United States, this sort of movement to deliver so-called equality to different groups has not succeeded. The disadvantages have outweighed the very real good that was thought to be promoted by these kinds of programs. It is not that the intention behind these programs was not good; it was very good. We all want fairness. We all want people to achieve their full potential.

I would submit this is not something that can be delivered to people. It is only something we can work for and earn. We can ensure that people have the best opportunities to succeed in those goals by treating them as individuals, by allowing them to have equality of opportunity but letting the result of that opportunity rest with the individual.

Abraham Lincoln said that if you have what it takes, the world will take what you have. I believe that is true. We do not and should not be splitting the world into groups. We should be working together as valuable members of society, as individuals with full potential.

It is important that each one of us make a commitment in our dealings with each other to be fair and impartial, both publicly and privately. It is something we need, but not as something legislated, not as something that is owed to us. It should be something we work and strive together to achieve. It cannot be legislated. It would destroy what we want to have in the spirit of individuals to act otherwise.

I think we each applaud the notion of the hon. member's motion. We want to have equality of opportunity. Our charter of rights says we are equal before and under the laws of this country and that must be maintained. However, to give special preference and special assistance to people is to deny them the right to meet their goals on their own merit with their own achievements. We should not be moving in the direction of this motion.

(1520)

Ms. Maria Minna (Beaches—Woodbine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found the member's speech interesting. She was talking about individualism as if we stand alone and do not need anything else around us.

What I hear her saying is that this country has never had and does not have today any sexism or racism that we need to worry about, that there is no stereotyping of the disabled and the physically challenged. She very well knows those very people came before us and told us that of them, something like 2 per cent or less have university educations. Two per cent or less have proper jobs because they do not and cannot access jobs because of stereotyping. This is just the physically challenged. I am not even talking about the racial situation.

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The hon. member was talking about individualism and being able to stand alone, being able to make our decisions alone without any laws, rules, collective understandings or agreements of any sort. There was a time when that did exist. At that time there was also child labour and slavery in the world without any of these laws. I do not believe she is suggesting that we go back to those times.

The hon. member is also forgetting that women had to fight. There is the Person's case. Why do we even celebrate Person's day now? Did we forget that we had to fight for the rights to be considered as people and persons? It was not that long ago and a lot of things are still happening.

We saw in the paper just recently where women in business cannot get loans and have to pay higher interest. They stand alone but it does not seem to help. Being individuals does not seem to help.

Yes, we have a charter. Why do we constantly have to go to the Supreme Court with charter challenges in order to get the rights under that charter? They do not automatically happen just because there is a charter. How did we get the rights under that charter? It was by fighting tooth and nail because they were not in the original draft of the charter.

How does the member expect to stand alone, individually isolated and through osmosis each of us will do the right thing only because we want to and because it has never happened before?

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, it is very important to understand that because we are each responsible for our own future and our own achievements does not mean we are in isolation. Nobody with common sense would even suggest that a society which is a corporate word would want to isolate anyone. I do not recall ever using such a word. Yet, this hon. member is so concerned about branding people and putting them into groups that the word isolation stands out in her mind if you even dare to oppose such a concept.

We must help each other. That is the whole point of society. Everybody has read the poem "No Man is an Island". We know that to be true. What is really important to understand is that struggle is part of the human experience.

Yes, the struggles she talked about were important. Those struggles are going on today and will continue, but the important thing is that we become responsible for what we make of ourselves. If we are delivering results to people and delivering the things they need, then where is the achievement and the merit? It is owed to us and it becomes ours by matter of right. We do not have to work for it.

Discrimination cannot be redressed even though discrimination is a terrible thing. If I had been alive at the time when women could not vote, I would have been up there hollering and

screaming as loudly, as articulately and as passionately as anyone else. Discrimination cannot be redressed by more discrimination which is exactly what we are going to get if we are not careful.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I happen to be one of those people who believes we do not do enough research in Canada and probably throughout the world on people issues, the questions of poverty, racial discrimination, et cetera.

(1525)

I am particularly concerned with the following. Is it the hon. member's opinion that we undertake enough research on people issues in Canada, obviously including issues that are directly related to women in society in general. I refer specifically to equal pay for work of equal value. Do we undertake enough research on other issues are particularly relevant to women, for example in the field of health? Do we undertake enough research in redressing some of the financial injustices women suffer in society?

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that all members of society are equally important. Why are we singling out a particular group as needing special help? All of us need to be treated fairly and impartially in this society, not just some of us. There is no reason to suggest that some of us are more entitled to fairness and impartiality than others. That is just not sensible.

We need to be concerned about each other. We need to help each other. Throughout the centuries the people of good ethics, solid citizens, the people who were respected were those who cared for the disadvantaged, the poor, the needy, those without a voice, those who were without anyone to fight for them. We must continue to do that.

The only point I am making is that kind of caring cannot be legislated. It must be done on an individual basis. It must be done by working with people. It is not done by creating some scheme where results are guaranteed, but where opportunities are fought for, where people are valued and where their achievements and aspirations can be freely met. It is a far different thing from meeting those aspirations for them. It gives them the opportunity to meet them.

We need to discuss the distinctions in this important area because it is a critical area. We have to care about each other and we do. What is the most caring thing, to give people gifts or to allow them the opportunity to get what they want in life through their own merits, their own struggles and their own efforts?

An illustration is often given of a butterfly that struggles and struggles out of the chrysalis. A chick tries to struggle out of an egg. Both are long and exhausting processes. However if you

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tear open that chrysalis or that egg, the new creation that comes out of it is weak because it has not had to struggle.

We need to be there for each other. We need to care about each other's struggles. We need to make sure there is fairness and impartiality. We cannot deliver things to people that they can best benefit from by achieving them themselves. That is a very important point in this debate. I hope that satisfies my hon. friend about what I mean in that regard.

Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had a press release. It said that women in new businesses are refused small business loans 20 per cent more often than men in new businesses. It also said that women in business pay 1 per cent more above prime than men in business do. I would like the member to respond to how we as a society should deal with these kinds of inequities.

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, this is an important point. On the face of it, these kinds of statistics look like nothing more than discrimination.

The question must be asked: Are the banks which are clearly in the business of making money simply refusing women loans because they do not like women? If that is the reason, then they should be hammered over the head. It is stupid.

What difference does it make if you are a man or a woman in business? The point is, is there a good business reason as to why this decision is being made? If there is a good business reason, then as a business woman I am going to make sure that I meet the concerns of the bank and qualify for the loan I need. I am going to satisfy the bank that it would be very well advised to give me the needed money because I am a good risk. That is the kind of initiative we need.

(1530)

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the discussion today. I am delighted that the concerns pertaining to 52 per cent of society are being addressed in a thoughtful manner based on the political observations of people.

Politics makes strange bed fellows, if I could put it that way. Each of us chooses the political party that best suits our interests and concerns. Perhaps the way we view society is reflected by the choice of where we sit in the House. We have been listening to a very interesting approach. Much of it reflects the values I consider important. Some of it is totally outrageous and some of it is strictly political partisanship of the weakest form of politics I could possibly think of.

Notwithstanding, it is vital that we enter into this kind of discussion. I am very pleased to respond to the motion of the opposition member regarding federal action to achieve women's economic equality.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her motion. She is asking this House to affirm a principle that is also dear to my heart, the economic equality between men and women. It is not easy to achieve, but it merits discussion, particularly after the speech by the hon. member for the Reform Party.

Our government is firmly committed to helping women attain equality. There is no doubt that the equality of women, fairness and justice for all hinge on economic independence.

We also know that economic equality is fundamental to the well-being of women and indicative of the status of women in our society. Being affluent and having a good job make it easier to stand up for your interests. If you are at the bottom of the scale, if you are a divorced woman, if your parents have lived a life of confrontation accompanied by physical abuse, your life will not be quite the same. Equality will be lacking. I believe it is up to society, men and women together, to take an interest in these vital issues.

In my view, women must be able to take part in the workplace, to receive equal pay for work of equal value, and to contribute equitably to our collective wealth. I must tell you that, as a mother who had sons, would I not have wanted the same treatment, the same equality of opportunity for my daughters—had I been blessed with some—as for my sons, and as for my daughters-in-law today? If they have the same education, the same ability and the same experience, why do they not deserve the same treatment? I have never understood why we cannot ensure that our sons and our daughters live their lives on an equal footing. This situation can change if women decide to have children, and this must be taken into consideration as well.

I feel that it is very important to find a way of ensuring that the equitable contribution to our collective wealth benefits everyone, all members of our society, women as well as men.

(1535)

[English]

I am pleased to be part of a government that is determined to accelerate the advancement of economic opportunity for women not only in the marketplace but also in their daily lives if they choose to work in their homes. I am honoured to serve under a Prime Minister who is committed to exactly the same goal.

The goal of the Liberal Party has not changed. Times have changed. What we saw as necessary many years ago has changed in the new reality of today's world, whether it is the technology

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that has changed, the organization of society that has changed or the role and place of women in society that has changed.

We can look at the House and at the number of women who have been able to win “gagner leurs épaulettes au niveau politique, elles siègent ici”.

An hon. member: On their own initiative.

Mrs. Finestone: Not on their own initiative, I say to my colleague across the floor. From a lot of work by women like me and plenty of others.

The Liberal Party has brought into force a Human Rights Act, a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a royal commission on economic equality, all structures of society that express our will to ensure equality for women and that give us the legislative mandate and the tools we need that were not in place when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women first held its hearings.

I appeared before the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. I appeared about child care. I appeared about latchkey children. I appeared on the role of the volunteer in society, the needs of the volunteer and the need for recognition for unpaid work. The women here today gained many opportunities right back to the Lavalee case and right through the history of the development of equality and opportunity for women.

The women who think today that there is nothing we need to be concerned about, that violence against women is not a reality, that it is not something society should deal with, and that the Minister of Justice who has been doing a fine job addressing many of the issues should not be doing it, have missed the point that 52 per cent of the population require attention. All those issues in society need to be addressed.

I thought it would be worthwhile to address some of the points raised in my absence this morning. I was attending other duties and could not get back to the House on time. I gathered from what colleagues in the Reform Party said concerning women's equality and the consolidation of the federal government's organizations for women that they accused the government of not taking enough action on equality. They referred to us as a special interest group. They talked about us as a particular bunch in society.

Quite frankly this bunch in society, this gender called women, females, wives, mothers and grandmothers, happen to make up 52 per cent of the population. They are not a special interest group. The gun lobby is a special interest group. The banking institutions are a special interest group. Certainly women are not a special interest group. They are an integral part of society. Their concerns need to be addressed through research, through public meetings, and through advancing their concerns on the floor of the House.

Members of the House should make sure they consult their ridings to find out the concerns of women, their husbands and children. They might be more reflective of real society and stop worrying about the peculiarities of a just society from their perspective which seems to want to throw everybody in jail and throw away the key.

They have called for the government to get out of child care, that women should stay at home and look after children. If all women in the workforce stayed at home over 20 per cent more of the population would be living under the poverty line.

They do not recognize that women go to work not only because they like to and not only because they have confidence and want to but because they need to in order to keep their families above the poverty line. I do not expect the Reform Party to understand that.

(1540)

They also talked about the question of the lack of need for any special action. There is plenty of need for special action so that the women of the country will be ensured of special action.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to talk about the project to merge these institutions, a project I have just tabled, and the action the government has undertaken with respect to the three groups serving the interests of women, because I think it a bit unfortunate that this was not well understood. Perhaps the opposition party, the Bloc, did not have an opportunity to carefully read the document I tabled and the time perhaps to read what I said in the House. In this regard, I would like to draw their attention to certain facts.

Through in-depth research undertaken by this government to ensure that it gives careful attention to fiscal matters—and, with all sorts of new things in our society, and with the need to be careful with the deficit as well, we must manage our society very carefully—as part of my mandate with respect to the status of women, I looked at the three major institutions, government institutions. This has nothing to do with the private sector and the organizations in the private sector, which have their own sets of problems. That is another issue. It was not the issue I dealt with; I tried to ensure that they operated better and in a way that would see to their interests from the grass roots right up to Cabinet and from Cabinet back down with the information required.

It was discovered that everything was in triplicate. We had three separate administrations and three levels of duplication, and I took those steps to streamline all these resources, to concentrate our efforts and to reinforce our capacity to achieve equality.

By merging the three groups, we will eliminate confusion and facilitate access to government. This initiative will also provide a more direct link with women organizations at the local, regional and national levels as well as with non-governmental organizations and universities. What is more important is that I get to keep the \$700,000 so that—yes, the Bloc member is

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surprised, but I want him to have peace of mind, I do not want him to worry—the money previously earmarked for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women will be reallocated to research conducted by Status of Women Canada and by women's groups, universities and other organizations.

We are going to see what happens, and we are going to consult on the reallocation, but the money for independent research will be—and this is a commitment I made yesterday—given to arm's length institutions and the results will be published in the interest of women, for women, and will not be touched by the government.

I needed that. Did you think I was going to take this money away from women's organizations? No, you started this for petty political purposes. I must say that this kind of system will be much more efficient. I also find strange that my opposition colleague would criticize the action of the federal government when the Province of Quebec recently restructured its own department on women's equality and she did not say a word. This demonstrates, on her part, a great interest in the status of women in Canada and I commend her for that.

I should make it clear that by consolidating all women's programs into Status of Women Canada we are working in the best interests of all women.

(1545)

I know that some women are concerned that merging the advisory council with my department would essentially mean that the government could help itself to its funding. Far from it. I will not be a minister all my life. I have worked long enough not to want to pull the rug out from under women's feet, regardless of the government. I worked for ten years on the other side of this House and know how women can be misled and their interests forgotten. Such policies, they are smoke and mirrors; and they did not serve us well. This is not the type of policies this government wants to implement.

This government relies on the public, on women's organizations, to monitor our work and to tell us what they think of our performance. I must say that since my appointment, I have travelled a lot, I have met lots of women all over Canada, more than a hundred or so organizations. I chaired the working group on child care. I listened. This government listens. In Cabinet, we talk about women's interests and we will continue to do so.

We now have a very diversified, very competent network of people who are able to appear before us, whether it be on issues of violence or others. The Minister of Justice and I organized a round table on that subject. Forty groups participated. Some 70 persons came. The government, not the advisory council, paid for these consultations.

When the Minister of Human Resources Development held his consultations, a task force was set up. This cost money, but I insisted on it. No later than three hours after the presentation of the budget, I received a phone call requesting permission to hold consultations across Canada.

As a result of this change, we will no longer have a large office in Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver. The appointment of women by order in council has become a thing of the past. These offices will be closed, but in each region of Canada, in each city, there are women working closely with the people, who know who should get funded and who should not. They are able to organize gatherings, as they have been doing for me up to now, allowing me to meet people.

I just met with the Quebec women's federation, RESO, Charlotte Thibeault's coalition. These women mentioned that they research the issues they bring forward, but that otherwise they are not involved in research; they complained a lot about the way research is being carried out. I said that, from now on, research will be done according to the needs identified by women's groups and academics, that the choice of who will do it will be theirs, and that results will be published.

You do not like it? Too bad. I believe it is the way it should be done. We will consult women's groups as to the process. It may not be what you want, but I believe that it is the best way for women. Judging by the work women did in preparation for the Beijing meeting, I know that we are making progress. There are still a lot of problems, but we are making progress. Women on this committee held consultations with 2,500 women across Canada. They drafted answers and helped Status of Women to make improvements to the draft working paper.

I believe that the links, the co-operation and the mutual respect we established in many ways are in the interest of everyone.

(1550)

In this way we are going to improve research and get more out of our consultations. We will be much more direct. We will use a "one-stop shopping" concept, research will be conducted by outside sources, independently, and all aspects of the library, etc, will also be reviewed, as well as distribution, because we will begin using all kinds of new technology. Women are quite advanced in this area.

I know that some people believe that we have stifled the voice of an important women's association and even silenced it. This is not true. This statement only confuses matters. The organization which was closed down was financed 100 per cent by the federal government.

Supply

The federal government will transfer close to \$2 million for the status of women. I think this is a very good approach and I am very proud of what we just did because there comes a time when we have to turn over a new leaf. The 1970s were different from 1995. We had to closely examine what we were doing, and in doing so, we found a better way to handle women's issues.

Madam Speaker, thank you and I still acknowledge the importance of the role of women. Our political party will persevere, in our interests and in the interests of women—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I regret that I must interrupt the hon. minister, but her time is up. We will now proceed to the question and comments period.

The hon. member for St. Boniface has the floor.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened with interest to the minister's speech and I would like to ask her a question.

Like her, I realize that the government is doing a number of things for the women of Canada.

[*English*]

For example, we have come forward with an agreement for equal pay for work of equal value. We have the gun control legislation that is being supported by women. We have the prenatal nutrition program. We have the court challenges program that has been reinstated, centres of excellence on women's health and a number of others.

There is simply a larger proportion of women who are poor, a larger proportion of women in society who are victims of violence and abuse, and a larger proportion of women who are single parents. Women still earn less than men.

Despite various initiatives that have been undertaken by government and because of certain decisions that have been taken—my colleague has addressed one of them—are we assured that we will continue to make progress on these fronts?

I tried to raise a question previously with respect to the importance of research on those fronts. I have a bias, I must admit. I think research on those issues is of critical importance to ensure that we continue to move forward because there are serious problems in society that affect women disproportionately.

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I have visited Winnipeg and I have met with both English and French women's groups in the area as well as with multicultural groups. I can assure him I am more than ever convinced the research that needs to be done is proactive research as well as reactive research.

In the proactive field of research today, which we did not have in 1972 with the advisory council's arrival on the scene, there are women chairs of study across the land. Within the universities there is capacity to look at many of the problems such as the problems of poverty, the problems of inequality in terms of education and training, the whole area of change in the percentages of men and women in various institutions, and the need for the diversity of Canadians to be better reflected in the House.

A university study was done on the integration of women and visible minorities into the marketplace. When we see the disparity at least once it is put into concrete terms through research at the university level, or at SHRC for that matter, and we are in a position to be able to speak out and effect change on government policy.

I listened to some of the remarks of members of the Reform Party which I do not share. They say that government cannot make life fairer.

(1555)

If we did not do research through the Canadian Federation for Independent Business, would we know that women who have an excellent record with respect to the creation of jobs in small and medium size businesses are far more effective and far more efficient or that over 40 per cent of the jobs are created by the small businesses in which women are the most successful after five years?

That research was done by the private sector, the CFIB in this instance, not by a university. It indicated that despite their success 20 per cent more women were refused loans at our banks and institutions than men and that when women obtained loans, 95 per cent of them had to pay higher rates with more difficult terms.

That research was extremely pertinent. I am very glad the member asked the question. It is a solid answer to the Reform member on whether or not we need to be doing work on equality for women in the fields of employment and earnings. Yes, we need to reach economic equality. The question was very pertinent. It allows me to thank the member very much.

There is room for research at all levels: through the private sector, through the public sector and through the universities with their great expertise.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a question to the Secretary of State for the Status of Women. I understand the government's new policy, which led to yesterday afternoon's decision that that would be the best way to operate.

I do not think that there is unanimity among women's groups or that it is as obvious as the minister would have us think. There is concern about the probable lack of transparency there would be in the department when public servants in this department are

Supply

called upon to promote the department's policies. The role of the advisory council was precisely to criticize government inertia and to suggest possible solutions regarding the various policies of the government concerning the status of women.

Take day care facilities, for example. We know that the 3 per cent of GDP has been reached and that 50,000 day care spaces have been promised. This does not come from the government. We hear about pay equity, while women are still earning 72 per cent of what men earn, and there are other decisions that the government is dragging its feet on. I think that enough has been said today about the various possible solutions that the government could adopt to bring about a considerable improvement in the economic situation of women.

What concerns me is the lack of transparency that might result from this new direction. I am also concerned about the choice we would have to make.

The minister said yesterday in her speech on the budget in the House that the various women's groups were very strong, very effective. I think that some of them are but that others are not so strong and do not have the Canadian Advisory Council's analysis capacity. Without this analysis capacity, how will they manage?

Women living in the outlying regions will have to negotiate with the federal government, to travel, to defend their priorities. The minister may be very positive, but I do not know what the outcome will be in the long term. I do not think, however, that this way of looking at things will be an end in itself.

She seemed to be saying that the women's movement was born of various concerns and that it was in its infancy when the council was created. I would say that, on the contrary, we have not yet reached maturity.

In 1920, women were earning 50 per cent less than men; in 1995, women are making only 72 per cent of what men make. We have clearly lost ground.

(1600)

Given the economic situation, we know full well that women will be the hardest hit. This afternoon in the House, the Deputy Prime Minister replied to a question I asked on the dismantling of the advisory council—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. The secretary of state, for a brief reply.

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. I am aware of her keen interest for women's issues. I know she speaks from the heart and I respect her for that. While I understand her interest for women's issues, I wish she would reply when Reform members make statements in this House, because it is quite frustrating to hear them sometimes.

I must say that, indeed, the advisory council had a role to play, and it played it well. Perhaps it even took a mother-hen approach at times. As I see it, the council was the driving force behind many activities and initiatives. You cannot say that, over the years, the Fédération des femmes du Québec, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women—the similarity of certain names causes some confusion, I know—the National Council of Women and others—there are a dozen organizations out there that I could name, have not been able to make representations and have not done so. And, through independent research, we will make sure that they can decide for themselves what their priorities will be regarding all the women's groups; I will not interfere. I think it will be in their best interest.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the motion tabled by the hon. member for Québec, which deals with the economic equality of women. In spite of all the attention generated by the status of women in Canada, and by a number of legislative measures and policies designed to correct the inequalities of which they are victims, the situation of women remains very different from that of men, and there is still a lot to be done before they can enjoy the same benefits as their male counterparts.

As the member for Drummond, I first want to express my friendship and my support to women in my riding, particularly those who work in organizations dedicated to improving the situation of women in our riding. As the opposition critic on health issues, this is also an opportunity to stress the urgency of establishing a health care system for women.

The moneys allocated to research on women's health issues remain largely inadequate. There are insufficiencies in various sectors such as breast cancer research, gynaecology and obstetrics, chronic and degenerative diseases, mental health, violence, occupational diseases, specific needs of immigrant women of ethnic origin and native women, teenagers, elderly women, and so on.

At the beginning of her mandate, 15 months ago, the Minister of Health told us how she was going to promote women's health. She explained the programs that her government was going to implement, so as to correct the inequalities which affect women in the health care system. The reality, however, is completely different.

Since the Liberals took office, the funds allocated to health care keep diminishing. This government maintained the freeze on transfer payments to the provinces, thus creating a shortfall for provincial health care systems, including Quebec's. The government goes even farther in its last budget by cutting \$70 million in the health department's budget, which is a 3.8 per cent reduction. But nothing is done to correct the imbalance between men and women.

Let me tell you about breast cancer. Canada has the world's highest rate of breast cancer.

(1605)

Finally, the incidence of this terrible disease has constantly increased since the 1960s. Each year, 15,000 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed, and 5,000 women will die of it this year, that is, one every two hours.

In Quebec alone, 1,500 women will die of this terrible disease. In Canada and in Quebec, a woman has one chance out of ten to develop breast cancer.

A national study, which was published last Thursday, shows that 41 per cent of women in Canada and in Quebec consider breast cancer to be the main threat to their lives.

I think it is about time that we decide to overcome this disease. To do this, we must have a breast screening strategy taking into account both genetics and environmental factors.

This is exactly what emerged from the final report tabled last fall by the national forum on breast cancer in which the health minister took part. This report recommended that national practice directives be adopted immediately to enlighten doctors and promote research and job training. So far, nothing has been undertaken by the government in office.

There is also cardiovascular diseases, which are the main cause of death among women. Indeed, 40 per cent of women will die of cardiac arrest or of cardiovascular complications. Despite these alarming figures, the last budget resulted in cuts to the Tobacco Demand Reduction Strategy.

Resources allotted to this program will decrease from \$185 million to \$81 million. At the very least, this represents a \$104 million reduction, even though the number of smokers continues to rise, especially among women. We know that smoking increases the risks of cardiovascular complications. However, members will remember that tobacco control once was the health minister's favourite theme.

There were reports recently, and again today, in the media about the terrible problem relating to genital mutilation which is wreaking havoc in several countries around the world and is even practised here, in our society. The government is not addressing this crucial issue and we are wondering what it is waiting for.

Quebec has already showed leadership by announcing that it will criminalize this action and sue everyone guilty of genital mutilation. The federal government refuses to clearly add genital mutilation in the Criminal Code, despite the repeated requests made by the official opposition and the government of Quebec and the fact that several European countries and states in the U.S. have already taken such measures.

Supply

When can we expect a truly good health system for women? I still remember when birth control was not well known and was hard to get. I remember when women's diseases were considered a normal part of women's lives and their imaginary disorders. I remember when knives were used way too often. We only have to think about all the unnecessary hysterectomies that were performed.

Of course you will tell me that times have changed, that today's policies stress the importance of addressing social and economic problems recognized as being directly related to health. But how are words translated into action? Far from improving, the status of women is even deteriorating.

For years, women's health centres in Quebec have been repeating that the social and economic conditions of women, poverty, the double workload, violence and discrimination are all problems that a pill will not solve.

The solution for women is to eliminate poverty because there is a direct link between poverty and health. Statistics have clearly shown that low income people are sick more often than others.

(1610)

In this year of tolerance, the International Women's Day that we celebrated last week compels us to have greater respect for ourselves and for others. Women have demonstrated throughout history that they have this extraordinary capacity to obtain a consensus. Our modern societies, whose only values now seem to be those generated by the globalization of economic and cultural markets, need more than ever the involvement of women as mediators.

In the name of profitability, our societies exclude more and more people and fuel the rise of several forms of fundamentalism. Because they are the very ones with the sensitivity and the ability to do it, women will have to assert themselves to lead a successful battle against poverty and radicalization.

I will close my remarks by addressing the women of Quebec, to whom I want to deliver this message. In a few months, we will have a crucial decision to make, a decision that will have a lasting impact on our future. My wish would be to see the women of Quebec taking part actively in this historic moment because no country can be built without the voice, the will and the consent of women. And the new society that we see rising on the horizon must include the women of Quebec.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the hon. member for being very realistic about the role of women in the political life of a society. They say that when men go into education it is for themselves, whereas women do it for their family, in other words, society.

Supply

I am convinced that women, when they see what is happening in Quebec, will certainly get involved in order to maintain their quality of life at an appropriate level and ensure better opportunities for the future in case Quebec separates and becomes independent.

We have travelled the same path. Women respect each other. Redefining borders will not help in any way. It will create a situation where poverty will be worse for women and their families.

I would like to ask a question of my colleague. When she says that we must follow up on what is happening in Quebec because it just ruled that the mutilation of female genital organs is a crime, I wonder if she was absent from the House when the Minister of Justice and myself ruled that our federal legislation would also consider such mutilation to be a criminal act? If we are presented with a case involving such an act, it will be tried and judged according to Canadian laws since it is a criminal act.

I am very happy to see that the Court of Quebec, or rather the Human Rights Commission, has ruled on that issue. I am also happy to see they agree with us on a point that has already been ruled on in the Canadian laws.

There is no need for lengthy analysis to find out that such a practice goes against Canadian values, that it is unacceptable to mutilate female genital organs and that people have to abide by our rules and standards, period. Certainly, for all women, whether they live in Quebec or in Ontario, whether they are from Nova Scotia or Newfoundland or Vancouver, British Columbia, this act of mutilation is unacceptable.

I am asking the hon. member a second question concerning the health issue. In order to eliminate poverty, we took some measures in favour of pregnant women. We also undertook some research on breast cancer, on heart diseases in women and on their prevention. Considering her great interest in that matter, I am convinced that, given her great interest for these matters, if she has other ideas to bring out at one time or another, she will assist the health committee of the House of Commons by making her comments, which will be greatly appreciated.

Is she ready to bring us other suggestions on this?

(1615)

Mrs. Picard: Madam Speaker, regarding sexual organ mutilation, we note that it is not mentioned that this practice is criminal. Why does this practice still exist? As was noted earlier today, a physician had to perform surgery on young women. How is this still possible? He had to do nine operations. What can we do to stop that? The individuals who performed these barbarous acts on those young women are still running free. This practice is being performed in many places.

When people arrive in Canada, they do not know it is illegal in our country. They should be told, and the fact should be public knowledge. Steps must be taken to prevent that practice. This is happening here in Canada. In 1995, it is unbelievable that we still hear about those practices. In Toronto, a physician told me that he gets calls regularly from women who ask him to perform these operations on the sexual organs of their children. The Criminal Code must either be strengthened or other measures must be enacted because this situation is really alarming.

As far as—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. The hon. member for Laval Centre has the floor.

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Madam Speaker, allotted days on a motion of the official opposition provide special moments in this House, because, by making it possible to ask government about the real issues, they force parliamentarians to consider certain unavoidable realities.

The reality we are currently considering concerns more than half the population, since, today, we are assessing the government's action, or, rather, its inaction with respect to women.

On March 8, 1994, International Women's Day, the Bloc Quebecois tabled the following motion in the House on an opposition day:

That this House urge the government to recognize the principle of economic equality between women and men and to implement measures, in areas of federal jurisdiction, to guarantee women equity in employment, wages and living conditions.

What has become of this a year later? Women in Canada and Quebec agree: for this government, it is a long way from the cup to the lips. There was not a hint of the grand principle of equity in the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance. And yet women here need real action.

It therefore makes sense for the opposition critic on the status of women to table a motion denouncing the federal government for its inaction in its areas of jurisdiction through its failure to adopt concrete measures to promote the equality of women.

The Bloc Quebecois notes that the Liberal government has failed to keep the commitments it made with regard to promoting equality for women. One has only to look at the situation in various areas of social concern, including child care services, public housing and the struggle to prevent violence against women.

The Liberal government's latest decision to abolish the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is a clear indication of the cabinet's concern about women.

It appears that the government is no longer interested in hearing a voice independent of political power express the rightful claims of women. The council's credibility with various

women's organizations was commonly recognized. It is not easy to answer to one's conscience when the will to act is lacking.

It would seem that the activities of this organization will be transferred to Status of Women Canada. What activities are we talking about, however, since \$1 million in funding will be cut?

(1620)

The equal opportunities for women program will also be transferred to Status of Women Canada, but with a budget reduced by five per cent. They say that, for the moment, this cut will not affect grants to volunteer organizations working on the status of women issue. What we really want to know is how long will this moment last.

Of all of the issues regarding the status of women, violence against women is probably the most devastating, as much physically as it is psychologically and it also saps morale. Despite the efforts of groups working to stop violence against women, the incidence of violence has increased at an alarming rate. Can we fight so rampant a social ill with only sentiment and good intentions as weapons? No, Madam Speaker.

The violence that often stems from economic inequality could be eliminated if the government would only assume a strong leadership role in society, put equality high on the list of priorities and channel the appropriate resources to the cause. Governments do not have the right to expose the pursuit of economic equality for women to the whims of the tax system and budgets. Such behaviour is tantamount to subsidizing economic inequality.

More than ever, fighting violence against women must be a priority. Is it acceptable in 1995 that women and families still have to face violence day after day? In January 1994, Statistics Canada publicized the results of a vast survey in which 12,300 women participated. It brought to bear some disquieting facts.

It revealed that 51 per cent of all women have been victims of at least one act of physical or sexual violence. One in five were hurt and one in four were hurt so badly that they required medical attention. In 25 per cent of all cases, the husband or common-law spouse was the perpetrator. What is even more serious is that children witnessed the violence 4 times out of 10.

These figures jive, by the way, with the statistical data contained in a 1991 report called "The War Against Women". The report found that between 63 and 83 per cent of the victims of physical abuse knew the men who abused them. One woman in ten is assaulted by her spouse and, on the average, victims are abused 30 times before they call the police.

Supply

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women published its own figures, which have quite a story to tell about the treatment women receive. It found that one in four Canadian women were sexually exploited at one point of their lives. In half of the cases, these women were not even 17.

Considering these disturbing facts, how can the government justify its decision to reduce subsidies to organizations against violence towards women when the need is more pressing?

Women will not feel secure before there is true equality between men and women. How much injustice, inequity, inequality, and violence will the women of Canada and Quebec have to endure before the government commits itself to act in a concrete way and proceed with the necessary social and economic changes to achieve equality?

The Liberal government with its current budgetary measures in the area of unemployment insurance, with its determination to cut transfer payments to the provinces in the areas of health, education and social services is working towards a pull-out of the central government in these matters.

The so-called reform of social programs, postponed until 1997, announced a dark future for young people, the unemployed, senior citizens and, of course, women.

(1625)

Indeed, there is no doubt that women will be the first victims of the changes to eligibility criteria for unemployment insurance, in a large part because it will be based on family income. We can assume that women could be denied access to the plan because of the high salaries of their husbands. What about other payments, in particular old age security?

The same logic seems to apply, since the budget of the Minister of Finance is starting to open a breach into old age security. "If your family income exceeds a certain threshold, Madam, you will no longer get your monthly cheque." For many women, this cheque is tangible proof of a certain financial autonomy, very often the first they ever had. We cannot deny that some aspects of women's reality have been overlooked by decision-makers. But an oversight can be corrected, if only the will to be fair is strong enough for us to admit that we were wrong.

The economic security and equality of women can only be achieved if women are economically independent. In turn, economic independence is tied to the creation of lasting full time and adequately paid jobs. However, in 1993, women accounted for 69 per cent of part time workers in Canada. This ratio is unacceptable. Job insecurity is replacing economic security and equality for women. This is second rate equity.

Instead of jeopardizing the scant efforts made over the past decades to try to provide women in Canada and Quebec with economic equality, the government should recognize that only a

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sharp directional change in employment strategies will guarantee the women of this country the economic security necessary for individuals to find their balance, for families to be healthy, and for people to enjoy respect. This government has its work cut out, but it remains to be seen if it will have the courage to get down to business.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to add a few comments and make some observations. First, it is not the credibility of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women which is being questioned here, but the operating costs, the duplication costs. We are talking about a third of the budget being used for three full time employees, the president and two vice-presidents, and some thirty former part-time employees appointed by order in council. I must say that one third is too much. For the rest of the money that we will keep, that the Canadian Council will keep, we will make a review and consult women to determine how to put that money to good use. I believe this is a better way to ensure that many of the questions you raised on certain points, some important questions, will get at least a technical answer. That is another story.

To conclude on your colleague's speech on health issues, my other mandate, that of multiculturalism, has showed me that we should deal with that shameful and hateful issue of genital organs mutilation through education and not only through a judicial and criminal approach. It is through education that we can reach multicultural groups and various ethnic communities and start an information process. We are making a film on that subject for doctors, nurses, families and centres, and I hope this will also help.

Finally, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that it is not the Advisory Council which studied the issues and data on violence which you mentioned several times in your comments. That research was done by a group on violence appointed and paid by the government. It is also Statistics Canada which conducted a comprehensive research effort, known world-wide, and studied the treatment of women in the context of criminal law. These are the people who brought that to our attention.

(1630)

And it is I, as the minister for the Status of Women, who brought these data here, with my team. Do not create confusion for society at large. What was the role of the Advisory Council on the status of women? What is the role of the status of women, which I am in charge of? What are the roles of various groups in society at large?

I think that some answers to these questions could clarify things a little bit, so that we will know that equality of women will finally be coming. We know that a strong economy and the participation of women are the key to their independence. That

independence is very important. Do you not think that, in the future, if we cannot be treated as equals, if we do not have the right to equal salaries, if we do not have the chance to be equal in society, we could be the victims of violence?

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Madam Speaker, I just want to direct a comment to the hon. secretary of state. She talks about very high administration costs, saying that some women were paid outrageous salaries. When will highly paid men see their positions cut, too?

We are talking about education and communications. Since the hon. secretary of state maintains that the council's credibility was recognized, I wonder if the members of the Council on the Status of Women were consulted on the best way to review the overall handling of women's issues.

Women are being short-changed, in terms of equality. In the 1994 budget, there was the whole infrastructure program. I would like to know how many women got jobs in connection with the infrastructure program? And, if some of them did, it would still have been part time jobs.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for supporting my motion and for giving us an overview of the various areas in which the government is being criticized for its inaction. As far as day care centres are concerned, Quebec receives \$35,000; and day care needs in Canada are said to amount to \$2 million. As far as pay equity is concerned, women earn 72 per cent of what men earn.

I thank my colleague, and I would like to ask her if she agrees with the hon. secretary of state's comments during this week's budget debate. She said that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry to interrupt. The time is up, but I will give you 30 seconds to answer.

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Madam Speaker, I have a slight problem. She said that—Not having heard the end, I cannot answer. Since you wanted to give me the time to respond, please allow her to complete her sentence.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I would like to give the hon. member for Québec a short explanation on what is happening, because I see that she was slightly annoyed. When a member of the opposition has the floor, I must also give the other parties the opportunity to respond. If none of them rises to ask a question, I can recognize one of your colleagues.

Resuming debate.

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by commending the hon. member for Québec for giving the elected members of this House an opportunity to debate a most important and relevant issue, in my opinion.

Supply

In my capacity as member of Parliament, I would like to draw attention to the fine job done by several organizations in my riding, non-governmental organizations of course, who work with women. I have already done so at a brunch to which I invited them on Friday to mark progress toward equality.

In light of the theme for the next world conference on women for equality—there certainly was some discussion on the subject—I would like to congratulate them again, as I did on Monday.

Last week, on International Women's Day, the Prime Minister summed up quite eloquently the role and contribution of Canadian women. I think it is important that all members of this House, both men and women, know what he said in essence.

(1635)

“Today, said the Prime Minister, more women work in a broader variety of areas in which they have more influence on the decision-making process than at any other time in our history. And we have every reason to be thrilled about this. As we approach full gender equality, we are strengthening our society and opening new horizons for all Canadians. In Canada, women are making progress toward economic equality. Relying on their own means and abilities, women help shape the future of this country.” Not only that of one province, I might add. “As for the Canadian government, it is meeting the challenge. Women's equality is not a matter of special interests or rights, but rather a matter of social and economic justice, a matter of good government”.

This message is an inspiration to each and every one of us. It sets the role and contribution of Canadian women in the right perspective.

It is undeniable that we have made progress, by dint of hard work and often courage. But this progress does not benefit only women. It benefits the whole of our society.

[English]

This is because women's issues are everyone's issues. They are societal issues. They touch every single citizen.

We need to leave behind the cliché battle of the sexes where women's gains are interpreted as men's losses. We have to accept that when women advance toward equality everyone benefits. It is purely mathematical. When women, who make up 52 per cent of the population, are able to make a full contribution to society, 100 per cent of the population benefits.

[Translation]

What surprises me is the motion tabled this morning by the Bloc Québécois member. The hon. member obviously does not realize that the best way to help women is first to be a good government.

She should know that by creating 433,000 jobs in one year, the Canadian government makes a concrete contribution to women's economic equality. The member should also know that

by putting our fiscal house in order, we protect our prosperity, our social programs and our quality of life, something which equally benefits Canadian women and men.

[English]

The motion we are debating today talks about concrete action. Here are some examples of specific actions taken by this government. The job training and illiteracy programs provide women with some of the tools for greater economic independence. By combining these tools with job creation the government can help women access a full range of choices in their lives.

Our initiatives for small business, including improved access to capital, will help women entrepreneurs and create a climate more conducive to the creation of jobs for both women and men.

The Employment Equity Act improves the employment opportunities for women. Youth Service Canada, a new strategic measure, helps to put out of school and unemployed young people of both sexes back to work. The infrastructure program has funded projects such as the rehabilitation of a children's centre, the construction of community health centres, libraries, municipal day care centres and shelters. All of these are very concrete initiatives to help women achieve economic equality.

[Translation]

To be a good government also means adjusting our structures to make them simpler and more efficient.

This is why my colleague, the Secretary of State for the Status of Women, announced earlier this week the merging of three organizations dedicated to promoting women's equality.

As part of its program review process, the government examined the role of Status of Women Canada, of the Equal Opportunities for Women Program at the Department of Human Resources Development, and of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

It became clear that these three structures promote women's equality and, to various degrees, conduct research and work in close co-operation with women's groups.

Consequently, the government concluded that the best way to improve efficiency was to consolidate its initiatives to promote women's equality under the structure of Status of Women Canada.

This means that the Equal Opportunities for Women Program will be transferred to Status of Women Canada.

(1640)

As well, the research, communication and public information functions of the advisory council will become part of the routine operations of Status of Women Canada. This transfer will enable us to better manage the human and financial resources involved, eliminate duplication, and put an end to political appointments. These are all measures which the Bloc Québécois keep asking us to take as a government.

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This will help us create a “one-stop shopping” operation; to eliminate confusion and improve access to the government; to improve research, communications and public information services; to strengthen links with local, regional and national women’s groups, NGOs and universities; to ensure that funding for independent research is available; and to allow the federal government to focus its efforts toward promoting equality for women. These are tangible actions, not only words. This is a series of dynamic and realistic initiatives, which, put together, help Canadian women to progress towards social and economic equality.

Also, I want to mention that this government managed to take measures when it elected—or appointed, as the opposition would say—qualified women to positions in this House. I think significant progress was made when more women were elected to this House. This is one of many ways to ensure that women are on the road to economic and social equality.

[*English*]

Ms. Maria Minna (Beaches—Woodbine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for her well presented thoughts.

The commitment of the government to women as well as my commitment and that of my colleague is quite evident. Given that we are talking about women’s economic equality, would it help and enhance women’s economic equality much faster in all parts of Canada, including Quebec, if we were to get past and get over as quickly as possible this issue of separation which is in effect holding back the whole country economically, not just women?

Mrs. Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. Definitely. I spent 15 years working with Quebec politics and I see no progress for women if we constantly talk about separation, if we constantly talk about dissolving the country.

We have often said on this side of the House the worse way to advance the cause of women is by focusing on the issue of separation and not focusing on the issue at hand, assuring economic and social equality to women.

It is very unusual that members on the other side of the House talk about solidarity among women and yet they cannot talk about solidarity of all Canadians. We have to start by being united and have a united front to attack some of the problems that face women and men.

Women’s issues are not simply women’s issues. They are societal issues. We must work together in a united Canada to be able to ensure that women progress both socially and economically.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I was intrigued by earlier comments of members concerning the recent report of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It seemed to suggest there was a gender bias of some description in lending.

With some experience in the CFIB mode of surveying, I wonder if this is correct or if this is a reflection of the people who responded.

(1645)

I would like to put some interesting information on the record. It is from a Statistics Canada national survey on the financing of small business, dated November 1994. Statistics Canada found that 18 per cent of small businesses owned by men who had sought financing had been refused. For women the figure was 24 per cent.

StatsCan noticed that this difference may reflect an industry preference rather than sex discrimination by the lenders. An example that suggested this industry preference is the business and personal services industry which is the largest share of businesses owned by women. In fact, if there was a bias it had more to do with the kinds of business women determined they were going to try to open. It was not a gender bias.

The other was the question of whether or not there was a bias based on interest rates. Research has shown there is not a gender bias. It is strictly based on the credit worthiness of the business.

Mrs. Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased about this question. At least we can stick to the facts about how far women have come in terms of economic equality.

I want to bring to the attention of the member that Pierrette Leroux, who is the executive vice-president of the CFIB, said there is no doubt that women are penalized by banks and financial institutions. In fact, she called it financial sexism.

As this government has said, unless we can take care of our financial house, no one will be able to benefit from the resources we have, including women. When we talk about interest rates, we have proven by the budget we put forward, and the whole economic community agrees with us, that Canada is on the right track. Once we continue with the initiatives we have set forth in the budget, then hopefully we will move even closer to economic equality for women and all Canadians.

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to reaffirm the position of this government. We are here to ensure that all Canadians,

especially those who are most disfavoured, have equal access to the tools necessary for them to lead a prosperous life. That is one reason we are working so hard to get our house in order. However, we are trying to do it in the most compassionate way possible.

For women and all Canadians to lead an economically sound life they also need to be healthy. One thing follows another. We already know that more women than men who are poor tend to have a lower level of health. Women's health is a priority for this government. In the red book we promised to take action to improve women's health. This is a promise I am determined to fulfil. Canadian women deserve no less.

Canadians take pride in our health care system which is considered by many to be the best in the world. If we scratch beneath the surface, it is obvious that not everyone shares equally in its benefits.

Women are the primary caregivers to our families, our friends and our communities. Yet we overlook the factors that assure those same women their health.

The traditional understanding of women's health has focused primarily on reproductive concerns. Clearly, we need to look at women's health not just in relationship to men. It is not enough to simply compare life expectancy or the absence of disease as indicators of health.

We have to ask why women are often mistreated or over-treated by the medical system. We need to question why the distinctive effects of chronic diseases on women, especially in later life, have been overlooked. We have to ensure that diseases exclusive to women are no longer ignored by the scientific establishments.

[*Translation*]

Medical practitioners and decision makers are realizing more and more that women's health is part of the social and economic context of daily life.

(1650)

It is increasingly understood that the determinants of our health—our individual and collective experiences as women—are particular to each of us.

Women cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group. Our health is affected not only by gender but by various other factors such as age, race, social status, education and, yes, income.

We have to deal with larger issues such as poverty, violence, racism and a host of other problems that are inextricably linked to the health and welfare of women. Good health and welfare certainly do not depend solely on health care.

Women keep saying—and society as a whole is beginning to believe it—that health care must be based on an holistic approach that encompasses our emotional, spiritual, cultural and physical well-being.

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To improve the health of women, we have to eliminate the social and economic inequalities that hinder their personal growth.

We do not want impersonal health care. We believe that we should have a community-based continuous health care system delivered by a wide range of auxiliary health workers and health professionals. Midwives and nurses, among others, can often offer women quality care tailored to their needs.

[*English*]

We are devoted to the principle of self-care respecting that individuals know their own self-interests. We also hold that individuals have responsible roles to play in their own well-being.

Many of the dossiers I deal with are very difficult and demand some very difficult choices. One of the dossiers I have under me deals with breast cancer. It is a very difficult one and I must admit one that governments have not particularly taken to heart in the past. It is something I am working diligently at addressing to ensure that adequate dollars are put forward for research, not only in the treatment of breast cancer but also in the dissemination of information and research into the causes of breast cancer.

The recommendations brought forward by the National Forum on Breast Cancer underscore the key roles women must play in deciding their own regimen of care and treatment and in determining the direction research should take into the causes of the disease and its prevention.

Through collaborative efforts of Health Canada, non-governmental organizations and industry, it is estimated that approximately \$45 million will be available for research over the next few years to address breast cancer. Is this enough? No, it is never enough. We are going to have to continue to work diligently to increase the focus and the attention that is paid to this very, very difficult disease, one which affects many women in this country and has for many years.

We realize that initial prevention and avoidance of harm rather than health intervention is essential if we are to secure personal health and safety as well as economic equality. This is particularly true when we talk about substance abuse and sexual or physical violence. For this reason, harm reduction efforts of a gender specific nature have been critical components of many of our programs.

[*Translation*]

The women and tobacco initiative, an integral part of our tobacco demand reduction strategy, is another specific program for women.

Smoking is the first cause of premature death of Canadian women. More than 15,000 Canadian women die from the adverse health effects of tobacco.

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Thanks to programs specifically designed for women, awareness campaigns, and research, we are now able to help many women quit smoking for good.

In the same vein, we have launched a program to reduce smoking and promote healthy lifestyles. That program is aimed at low income women, undereducated women, single mothers, young women and Native women.

Any investment in those sectors can be productive during a lifetime, sometimes right from birth.

[*English*]

We are convinced that health promotion and disease prevention are the best long term routes to good health. That is why we believe it is better to invest in the Canada prenatal nutrition program which assures healthier outcomes for both mothers and babies than in high tech heroics to save infants at risk.

(1655)

We also share concerns about the efficacy of medical devices as well as the ethics and social and health implications of new reproductive technologies. We worry they have the power to fundamentally alter the lives of our children and families because they open the door to genetic technologies.

Expanding our vision of health; reducing our dependence on technology; doing what works, involving a broader array of health providers; self-responsibility; and a greater emphasis on promotion: These same topics match the key priorities identified as crucial to the renewal of Canada's health system and ultimately to our national well-being. They are particularly pertinent to women, but they are not just women's issues. They are society's concerns.

[*Translation*]

To solve many of those problems, positive response to change is required. I am convinced the health system reform offers the best chance of success. We should also remember in political discussions that we are here to serve the people, to serve Canadian men and women, and not only governments.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her remarkable speech. I have seldom had the opportunity to listen to such a long speech made by her and I want to congratulate her. Her speech is full of good intentions and I can tell she knows this issue thoroughly.

I am not rising to blame anyone. Unfortunately, in spite of all the policy statements and the good intentions expressed on both sides of this House, on the government side, there seems to be a distortion between what they say and what they do.

We have had many days like today where we discussed the status of women. I remember last December 6 was one of those.

The women of the Liberal Party joined the Bloc Québécois women to denounce the sometimes tragic situation of women.

However, in our daily lives, in our bills, we seem to forget all the promises, all the good intentions and we just brush honourable thoughts under the carpet. For example, the Liberal members and ministers, and perhaps even the minister who just spoke whom I regard and respect highly, are not opposed to measures like the one implemented in last year's budget, which takes into account a husband's salary to determine if a woman will be entitled to unemployment insurance benefits.

When we proposed other legislation, what did they do? Did they fight for child care? I know they are all good human beings and I respect them, but they are just not there when time comes to keep promises, turn words into deed and principles into actions. Unfortunately, they then often slip away.

I said at the beginning of my comments that I did not want to criticize. On the contrary, I hope that, like the health minister, women in the Liberal Party will be able to put pressure on their male colleagues, who are the majority, so that they take some actions in favour of women.

Do not be surprised if it is a man who is telling you this today. I have three beautiful daughters whom I love as much as my son, and I see that the future that we are preparing for them, the environment that they will have to work in, is not always to their advantage.

I am not asking for special privileges for women. I am simply asking that they be treated the same way as men and, often, as some minorities. In Canada, our women are not treated as well as some minorities, and I feel that this is not right.

I thank the minister for her fine speech. We can tell that she knows the subject and that her intentions are good. What I am asking her is, does she intend to promote her ideas within her own party?

(1700)

Ms. Marleau: Madam Speaker, I must say that it is absolutely necessary to keep working together, not only in this party, because here we really care about the status of women and the status of minority groups. As you know, many women are members of minority groups. My point is that we intend to do everything we can, despite an economic situation that is still pretty serious, to ensure that the dollars we have go directly to those who need them most. These are sometimes difficult decisions. We have groups that do good work, but the dollars we give them do not go directly to those who really need them.

When I consider the spirit of co-operation we see today when we talk about the status of women, especially poor women, and when I consider that for years we have had constitutional debates to decide which level of government should do what, and all kinds of commissions, and all very expensive, I start

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thinking that if we had worked together and collected all those dollars that were spent over the years and if we had all decided that the best thing we could do for Canadians was to sit down and do something about their economic situation, just imagine what we could have accomplished. We could have a national day care system. We would not have to fight about whether this is a provincial or a federal area of jurisdiction or priority. It would be wonderful if we could do that.

However, the fact is that we have provincial governments that have certain responsibilities which they are not prepared to relinquish. That is mine. Hands off. Even if what you want to do is very good, do not interfere. This causes problems, delays and a lot of frustration, especially for this minister, who realizes that these are very difficult issues.

When we consider what we could do if, first of all, we invested in our children, in children from infancy to 6 years of age, if we could intervene at that level, we would not have to build prisons, which we will have to do because we cannot afford the luxury of helping our children. We will do what we can. I would like to ask all those people who want the best for our children, for women and the future of our country, to get together and work on this and take the dollars we have to really do something good for Canadians.

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Madam Speaker, on March 8, we celebrated International Women's Day with all our sisters and colleagues around the world. Let me tell you that our day is no exception to those important days that we celebrate over an eight-day period.

I consider however that a single day is not enough to allow us to say that we have won the game. This day marks a time-out. It lets us have a moment's reflection before going on with the task at hand. On the last day of this octave, I am pleased to rise in this House to draw attention to the substantial and hard-fought gains made by women and set them in the perspective of future initiatives and representations, particularly with regard to Quebec women.

I also take this opportunity to salute all of Laval's women's organizations devoted to the well-being of their fellow citizens.

Let us never forget that the courage, determination and dedication that characterize earlier generations of women before cannot be overstated. These qualities have revolutionized the established order. In their quest for self-sufficiency, these women broke new ground so that their daughters could enjoy equal access to the right to vote, to higher education, the labour market, financial independence, political power and the corporate world.

(1705)

These past few years have also seen a number of firsts: first woman in space, first woman Prime Minister of Canada, first woman leader of a Republic, first woman Supreme Court justice, first woman member of l'Académie française, and the list goes on.

In fact, the statement issued following the recent world summit on social development held in Copenhagen reiterated ten commitments, including that of promoting absolute respect for human dignity, ensuring fair and equal treatment of men and women, recognizing and reinforcing the participation and role of women in political, economic, social, cultural and everyday life as well as development.

Where are we now? Today, women collectively ask themselves: Where are we now? What is the result of our efforts? What will be at stake the next time? We all know, from personal experience, that some progress was made. But let us not fool ourselves.

In spite of these improvements, major inequalities continue to exist. In times of budget cuts and high unemployment, women and the poor may well end up paying the price. Some realities remain true: women still only earn 72 per cent of what men make, the majority of them are in low paying jobs without any security, daycare services are inadequate, elderly women are poorer than their male counterparts, and so on.

What is the situation in Quebec? Many Bloc members travelled across various regions of the province in recent weeks, along with the regional commissions on Quebec's future. As you know, the hearings held by the 18 Quebec commissions were a true success. Over 50,000 Quebecers participated in these very productive discussions, as part of the largest public consultation exercise ever held in Quebec. People from every age group and background came and told us what they expect from a sovereign Quebec.

Once again, Quebecers showed that they can listen to each other, understand each other and get along with each other. They came and told the Quebec government about their hope for a generous, united and responsible Quebec which will care about women, children, workers, seniors and young people. Many women's groups participated in the debate. I can tell you that their vision of Quebec's future is not that of the current federal government. Can the gap between the reality in Quebec and the way the federal government is perceiving it be that wide? The Secretary of State for the Status of Women and her Quebec colleagues in the Liberal Party of Canada have missed a first rate opportunity to get back in touch with Quebec's reality.

In any case, since Liberal members were absent, I will try to convey to them what Quebecers told us. First of all, as I mentioned before, women groups told us, as they did during the

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Bélanger-Campeau Commission hearings, that they want major changes. These women want the federal government to stop interfering in areas affecting them, such as work conditions, family law, income security, day care and abortion.

The involvement of two levels of government in these areas, they said, leads to administrative overlap, program and structure duplication, a lack of harmony between provincial and federal policies, hence a waste of public funds and the inability of the Quebec government to initiate a coherent policy on women's issues.

Do you want examples, Madam Speaker? Maternity leaves are granted pursuant to the Act respecting Labour Standard while compensation for lost income is paid pursuant to the Unemployment Insurance Act, which makes it difficult for Quebec to implement a coherent policy concerning parental leaves.

(1710)

Let us deal with the preventive withdrawal of employees who are nursing or pregnant. In Quebec these women are covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, while federal employees and women employed by federally regulated businesses are covered by the Canada Labour Code. The level of compensation is not the same, which has the effect of creating two classes of female employees in Quebec.

Furthermore, federal intervention in family matters illustrates the double jurisdiction that exists in matters of family law. The federal Parliament has jurisdiction over marriage and divorce; Quebec has the authority to legislate on the celebration of marriage, matrimonial property, adoption and separation.

As the Council on the Status of Women said so succinctly, women, depending on whether they get married, separate or get a divorce may be provincially or federally regulated. Furthermore, this double jurisdiction prevents Quebec from creating a single family court.

I could go on and on and talk about the overlap in income security, social services, day care and many other areas.

There is a lack of consistency that has often been criticized and which women's groups brought up before the regional commissions on the future of Quebec.

My colleagues have, throughout the day, reminded this House of the government's failure to adopt concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women. Bloc members also condemned the drastic cuts in the latest federal budget and made it clear that women may be severely affected. The government claims it cannot afford to take steps to promote equality and equity, but it is not doing a thing to stop the waste, duplication and inconsistencies generated by overlapping federal and provincial policies.

The federal government has proven it is incapable of responding to the urgent needs and repeated requests of women in Quebec. As I pointed out earlier, Quebec is more progressive in a number of areas. All it needs is the tools to go even further and pursue an integrated development process.

There is an English expression that says "if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen". Women want the federal government to take this to heart and let Quebec have sole authority over areas connected with the status of women.

For all these reasons, I fully support the motion moved by the hon. member for Québec, and I urge the federal government to withdraw now from all areas under provincial jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks. I would like to follow her lead and take the debate in a slightly different direction. I ask her to remember that Quebec society of say 50 years ago was quite a different society than it is now.

It was a society that was very much oriented toward the church and the family. Indeed, during the second world war the francophone population of Quebec opted for the motto of the Vichy French, that the family and home were the important things rather than the traditional French motto of liberty and equality.

After the second world war we moved into a period in which there was the great liberation of Quebec socially. There have been wonderful advances in Quebec in freeing up the contribution of Quebec's women to the economy and culture of the country—not only francophone but anglophone as well.

Does the member not feel this change—it is a profound change that occurred in Quebec in the fifties and the sixties—owes much not just to the forces within Quebec society but also to Canada itself? I remind her that some very positive initiatives were coming from the federal government, particularly under Mr. Pearson and Mr. Louis St. Laurent which led to the kind of society that she wishes to see in Quebec.

(1715)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Debien: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. Indeed, Quebec has changed a lot, particularly since the fifties and the sixties, in the context of what was called the "quiet revolution".

The hon. member tells me that there was a profound change, and I was part of it; he also says that this profound change was due to forces within Canada that accompanied with the forces within Quebec. I would also like to ask a question to the hon. member. I would like to know what these forces are, because he

did not mention them. Saying that there were forces of change is one thing, but we would like to know what they are.

In Quebec, we know what our forces of change were and what contributed to these forces. We admit that there were also forces in Canada, but I would like to know what were the forces of change in Canada that might have had an effect on Quebec. Personally, I do not see them. That is what I am now asking the hon. member.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryden: Madam Speaker, far be it for me to instruct the hon. member in the history of Quebec. There is no doubt that in the fifties and sixties there was a great reaching out by the federal government under Prime Ministers Louis St. Laurent and Pearson. The history of the federal government did tend to be a history of anglophones prior to the arrival of Mr. Louis St. Laurent and Mr. Pearson and then we had Mr. Trudeau and so on.

We had an attempt, a very successful attempt, to involve Quebec in the life of the nation at large. Quebec has contributed enormously to Canada. I am surprised that my hon. colleague does not appreciate this.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Debien: Madam Speaker, I will answer the hon. member by saying that we certainly did not take the same courses in the history of Canada and of Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to spend a few minutes this afternoon on this opposition motion. As I listened to the debate unfold this afternoon, with people speaking with heartfelt conviction from different political perspectives on the whole notion of women's issues, it was interesting to reflect on it based on our own personal experiences, our life experiences.

I thought of my mother and grandmother. My grandmother was a war bride after the first world war. She came from a life of some luxury in Scotland and arrived on the prairies in Vulcan, Alberta to live in a sod hut. I thought of what she went through in her life as they were breaking the prairies. I thought of how her circumstances changed relative to the circumstances of my mother who often said perhaps her life would have been a little easier if she had been a man. I think that was because she did many things which were not normally within the purview of women. To be charitable, she would never rate all that highly on a scale of one to ten regarding her interest in washing floors, dishes, and that kind of thing.

(1720)

Interestingly she was the first women photographer ever in the newspaper guild in Canada. She edited and wrote a newspaper column for many years. I am very proud of her. She is in her

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mid-70s. She always wanted to write a book so she wrote a book. We are now getting it published.

In her lifetime and in the lifetime of many of the women and men in the House, the role of women has changed dramatically in our society. It has changed dramatically as a result of the emancipation of both men and women. Perhaps the greatest change that has taken place, at least to my thinking, is the generational change between my parents' generation and my generation, and the relationship we have with our daughters.

Most of us in this room who have daughters expect our children to be treated with absolute impartiality, regardless of their gender.

My wife and I have a daughter who is an engineer. She is a very competent person. It used to drive her crazy every time a male opened a door for her because she could do it on her own, thank you very much. I said to her: "Kate, there are times when you just have to be a little gracious. Perhaps whoever is opening the door for you is just being polite. It is not a statement meant in any way to put you down".

Perhaps one of the things that is missing in this great raging debate between men and women is that every once in a while we have to lighten up and not take ourselves so seriously.

We evolve as a people and as a nation. It is an evolutionary change not revolutionary change. There are those who would say that evolutionary change has a way of being better than revolutionary change.

I believe the debate was worthwhile and placed in good faith by the Bloc. It is worthy of mention that there are all kinds of inequities in life, not just inequities of women. They may feel for one reason or another that their potentials are not realized. It is not just people of different ethnic backgrounds who feel that maybe their potentials are not realized because of that background. These things are not right and it is a value system that we all share.

We recognize that people should not be restrained from the opportunity of achievement because of any physical characteristic, whether they are women or because of their colour or because of their religion, or anything. It is the equality of opportunity that everyone feels is a right in a free society. Circumstance is earned. Provided we, as a society, ensure that everyone; women, men, young and old, have equality of opportunity, then we are on the right track.

Our challenge is to ensure equality of opportunity, that the ladder between success and failure is climbed by the amount of effort put into whatever opportunity is afforded.

I thank the House for the opportunity to put a few thoughts on the record. If anyone has any further comments, I would be delighted to entertain them.

Private Members' Business

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am anxious to comment on this debate because the whole question of women's inequality and what it means for violence against women forms very much a part of the work that I do as Minister of Justice on behalf of the government. I am happy that this issue has been put before the House today for discussion. I congratulate members of the Bloc for devoting this opposition day to such an important subject.

(1725)

By way of comment, may I make it clear to my colleagues that the government is keenly aware of the findings of study after study in recent years which have addressed the issue of violence against women, and which have concluded almost invariably that violence against women is connected directly to the economic inequality of women. As a logical consequence, we will never effectively address violence against women until we come to grips with the causes of the economic inequality and correct them. It is surely a matter of common sense.

Most of the unpaid work done in our society is done by women, whether it is volunteer work or work in the home. There is a body of work done by Marilyn Waring, a New Zealand economist who has studied this phenomenon. She contends persuasively that until we find a way to collect census data to value the work done by women, we will never really have a true picture of their contribution to the economy of our society.

We must also bear in mind that women have a disproportionate responsibility for home and family. Despite the social changes of recent decades, preponderantly it is the woman who must take responsibility for the children and for maintaining a stable home environment for the family. They do so at an enormous cost to their professional aspirations, to their economic and financial opportunities. It is a cost that is often unfair, invariably beyond compensation. In the case of family break-up often it is the cause of real financial hardship.

When women do work too often they are consigned to the pink collar ghettos; clerical or secondary, supportive roles in the workforce that deny them the opportunities for fulfilment in the development and use of their full potential. We are told by those who keep statistics that 80 per cent of the clerical positions in the country are held by women. Even when they work in full time positions women earn 72 cents for every dollar earned by men in full time employment.

This ties directly to violence. Women are constrained to stay in abusive relationships by economic necessity for themselves and their children. Because they are in a disadvantaged category in society they do not necessarily have access to means of help to get out of those relationships, with tragic consequences for themselves and for the children.

This issue is of such significance and breadth that I cannot do justice to it in the few minutes allotted to me today. If there is anything I would record for the House before I sit down, it is the profound commitment of the government to do whatever it can in the mandate that the people have given us to address the issues we are discussing today.

In some small way we must start a process of broadening people's understanding of the questions, of working toward their resolution, of turning around the attitudes of people against violence against women and the economic inequality of women so that together, with a better understanding of the issue and a common resolve to see it addressed, we can improve the situation for the young women of Canada who will tomorrow come into their own.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): It being 5.30 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(19) proceedings on the motion have expired.

The House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

*[English]***CANADA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT**

The House resumed from December 5, 1994 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to address motion M-291 introduced by my leader earlier this year.

Today I would like to talk about education in the new economy. I would like to address not just the details of the income contingent loan repayment idea but how it fits into the bigger picture of training and learning in the new economy and what this means to younger Canadians.

The Journal Policy Options said last November:

The observation that Canadian universities in 1993 are in a state of serious crisis is now commonplace. Nobody agrees more than administrations, faculty and students. A preoccupation with underfunding pervades every campus.

Yet the demand for university education is skyrocketing. In Saskatoon and Regina near my constituency it is becoming increasingly difficult not only to get into the universities but to get into the colleges that prepare students for university. Thousands of students are being turned away and this is a reflection of our changing economy.

Natural resources have always been part of our country's greatest asset. Our economic and social progress was financed

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with beaver pelts and fish, with logs and grain, with minerals, with oil and gas and with power generated by our rivers.

Times change. We are increasingly turning our raw natural resources into manufactured goods, everything from cars and snowmobiles to fish sticks and frozen french fries. It is a valued added, information based economy today and those who would tap into this new economy must have the know how and the skills to compete with countries all over the world.

Canada's old economy, labour intensive based on natural resources and basic manufacturing, is no longer able to pay for all the things we want as a country and is no longer providing the jobs we need.

The situation is not unique to Canada. The countries of the developed world are experiencing the most important economic shift since the industrial revolution, the shift to a knowledge based economy in which the brain power of our citizens is our most valuable natural resource.

Government can help to cultivate Canada's most important natural resource, to develop our country's intellectual infrastructure by helping young people get a quality education. Two direct ways to do this are to invest public funds in education, for example by distributing cash transfers through a voucher system, and the other by enabling Canadians to invest in their own education through an improved system of student loans.

For the first time in 40 years and only after the Reform Party brought up the idea, the Liberals are looking at the income contingent loan repayments as a realistic way to help finance post-secondary education.

Let us take a look at the proposals by the Minister of Human Resources Development. The Liberal social policy discussion paper points out that established program financing for education is currently frozen. This funding consists of \$3.5 billion in tax points on \$2.6 billion in cash. The government says the value of tax points will increase as the economy grows and because of this the cash transfer will taper off to zero in about 10 years if nothing is done. His discussion paper proposes an immediate elimination of the cash transfer and the implementation of a student loan system where repayment of the loans depends on income.

In question period some time ago the Minister of Human Resources Development said the growth and value of tax points represents an increase in education funding, but that is clearly not the case. The reality is the cost of education will probably grow at least as much as the value of the tax points and possibly quite a bit more. All other things being equal, the elimination of the cash portion of federal transfers would represent a funding reduction of over 40 per cent.

(1735)

The government has recently figured out that we have a debt problem. It is encouraging that the Liberals are finally coming around to the Reform's way of thinking on income contingent loan repayments. A lot of work needs to be done. The crushing debt burden on Canadians, in particular the burden to young Canadians, will force them into more difficulty in the future.

What have we done for our young people lately? There is nothing more important to the future of our country than our young people. This is something politicians say every time they go to a campus or a high school, or otherwise make a political pitch for the youth vote. I say it, the Liberals say it and members of the Bloc say it. Talk is cheap.

Let us consider for a moment what we have done for our young people lately. By creating the national debt we have robbed from the next generation, our young people, to pay for today's consumption. I have said this across the country as I have travelled on the social program reform review. We have loaded off a tremendous debt on to our young people.

The government has spent tax dollars our grandchildren have not even earned yet. We have done something else. Through high debt and high taxes government has aided and abetted the decline of the Canadian job market. One result is that too many young people with degrees are flipping hamburgers or working as bartenders.

The spendthrift ways of our government have also crowded out education funding, resulting in a decline in the quality of education and higher tuition fees. Recently the Minister of Human Resources Development proposed eliminating the cash transfers in support of education altogether. Just a few months ago we saw students protesting hikes in tuition fees on Parliament Hill. As I said, talk is cheap.

We must realistically address the basic problems of the student loan system. Just as if unemployment insurance payments were reduced nationally, the welfare roles would swell. As post-secondary education funding to the provinces dwindled, tuitions rose and students turned more and more to student loans. More and more of them default when they cannot find jobs after university.

By 1992 loan defaults reached unprecedented levels. Almost one-third of outstanding loans were in default. Only two-thirds of those who had reached the repayment stage had begun to pay. Since 1964 the value of defaulted student loans has reached nearly \$1 billion. The true cost of the student loan system to the taxpayer is also unrepresented because the government charges only simple interest on defaulted loans.

There is another problem with the present system which works hardship on students. Under the present system students must begin repaying student loans eight months after graduation whether they have a job or not, whether they have a high paying

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job or not. This leads to an onerous burden on some students and eventual loan defaults with collection costs, loan write-offs and general increased costs to the taxpayer.

Under the income contingent system students would begin repaying their student loan only after they had found a job with a minimum level of income. The federal government would collect the student loans back through the income tax system. This would mean that students would declare their social insurance number on their student loan forms.

If students were allowed the flexibility of repaying their loans over a longer period of time through the income they earn in the future, tuition fees could rise to allow an education of continuing high quality. Students would be able to afford the tuition fees as they could repay over a longer period of time.

An income contingent program would also allow fee structures in universities to be more flexible, introducing a greater element of supply and demand in the system. It would squeeze out the irrelevant and useless courses from our universities, which everyone agrees should be done. If students must pay something more like market value for an education they would choose courses more carefully and universities would begin to supply what was demanded by the market.

I hope this will encourage parents and grandparents to save in an RRSP type fund for their children and grandchildren because of the onerous costs which will be involved.

(1740)

Mr. Tony Valeri (Lincoln, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to debate the hon. member's motion.

I know the hon. member appreciates the value of a good education and wants to ensure all Canadian students are given every opportunity to fulfil their education potential. On that point I am sure all members of the House are in agreement.

Education is a provincial responsibility. It always has been and always will be. Even though that is a given, the federal government recognizes its role in helping to make the post-secondary education system accessible to all Canadians wishing to participate in it.

The government would be acting irresponsibly if it did not consider support for post-secondary education in the context of our fiscal framework.

I remind the leader of the Reform Party that when the government began reviewing our social security system, we made it clear federal support to post-secondary education would have to be put to the best possible use because of limited resources.

That is still the case. Nothing has changed in that regard. The budget proposes to bring together transfers for health, post-secondary education and social services into a single bloc transfer.

This is a simple recognition of reality, not only the reality of fulfilling the mandate Canadians have given us to bring down our deficit but the reality that in the 1990s this will be a much more effective way for the provinces to administer federal funds that support social programs.

The government also supports post-secondary education through the Canada student loans program. When the government passed the Canada Students Financial Assistance Act last June, it introduced significant reforms to the Canada student loans program.

Intended to help students complete their post-secondary studies without undue hardship, the act provides for the repayment of student loans on an income contingent basis.

My colleagues from the Reform Party actively supported this provision. As a result, I am confused why my hon. colleagues are proposing such an amendment at this time.

Since the act was passed the government has consulted many parties on the concept of linking repayment of loans to income levels and that such a measure is still very much a possibility.

In its report to the House, the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development said that during its nationwide hearings it received energetic and concerned input from many educators in colleges and universities.

We can get a good handle on the desires of Canadians regarding federal support to post-secondary education by examining the committee's findings. The committee's report stated the fiscal situation of all governments precludes additional public spending on higher education in Canada.

The committee pointed out that because the government is reviewing its support for post-secondary education at a time when educational institutions are under increasing pressures, fiscal and otherwise, it must ensure scarce resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The committee noted that in debating federal contributions to PSE, it is essential to stress provincial jurisdictions over policies governing colleges and universities. It is important to help enhance the viability of colleges and universities while not interfering with provincial jurisdiction.

The committee's report reflects the broad views of Canadians on our post-secondary education system. I believe it is reasonable to ascertain from its input that the direction in which the government is moving has widespread support.

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There is another aspect that I do not believe the hon. member's motion takes into consideration. Because of what I mentioned regarding the provincial jurisdiction over post-secondary education, the federal government, even if it had unlimited funds, has no authority to tell the provinces how they should spend current PSE dollars.

There is no equivalent to the Canada Health Act in this area. I would therefore urge the hon. member to make his views on improving the post-secondary education system known to provincial education authorities.

I assure him we would certainly welcome the support of the Reform Party and of all members in strengthening post-secondary education.

Here is the new reality. Beginning in the 1996-97 fiscal year we will consolidate the current transfers under the established programs financing and the Canada assistance plan into a single block fund to be known as the Canada social transfer.

(1745)

In the first year the CST will be \$26.9 billion. That is a drop of \$2.5 billion. If we also consider the equalization payment, total major transfers will be only 4.4 per cent less than the current total. However cuts in all other areas of federal spending will be 7.3 per cent compared to the current system. In other words the government is doing what Canadians have asked us to do. We are getting our own house in order.

Equalization payments are not affected by the budget. Hence total cuts to those provinces with greater need will be less than the average cuts to all provinces. While councils that distribute research grants will be doing their share to help meet our deficit reduction targets, universities will still benefit from research grants totalling \$900 million for research on medical issues, science and technology and the social sciences and humanities.

The government appreciates that the hon. leader of the Reform Party has brought forward the issue for debate. I assure the hon. member that the Minister of Human Resources Development will work in collaboration with the provinces to establish the shared principles and objectives for CST.

Post-secondary education will not be shortchanged by us or the provinces. We all recognize, as does the hon. member, that colleges and universities play a vital role in training a highly skilled workforce.

Therefore I would like to move an amendment to the motion:

That Motion M-291 be amended by deleting all the words after the word "system".

I urge the House to support the proposed amendment that would endorse the continued investigation of the feasibility of the ICR concept in the broader context of helping students cope with the debts they incur by investing in their own future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion put forward by the hon. member for Calgary Southwest to amend the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act to include an income contingent loan repayment system. I am aware that my colleague from the Liberal Party has just moved an amendment but I do not think this will affect my discussion of the main motion since the amendment is consistent with the spirit of the motion by the hon. member for Calgary Southwest.

The hon. member favours an income contingent loan repayment system. We know that, under the current loan repayment system, loans are guaranteed by the government. A few months after graduation, the student starts repaying his or her loan according to a schedule set by the bank and at regular interest rates. In his first speech, the hon. member for Calgary Southwest pointed out that about 20 per cent of students had trouble repaying their debts under the current system.

Our Reform colleague's proposal links the annual amount and repayment period of the loan to the student's annual income. It also provides for debt collection through income tax.

(1750)

At first glance, the proposal may seem attractive in the sense that it allows for some flexibility, which is a good thing for a person in debt. It is important that the system be flexible enough to allow for specific situations. Last week, the Quebec ombudsman noted, while referring to young people who have problems repaying their loans, that one of the main problems was that the banks currently do not have the required flexibility to take into account the situation of these young people, with the result that several of them have no choice but to declare bankruptcy. Obviously, some improvements could be made in that regard.

Collecting debts by using the tax system is also interesting in the sense that very few people can avoid the tax man. This would ensure that the debts incurred by young people for their education would be repaid.

However, when you think of it, that proposal is not as good as it may seem. It is seriously flawed in a number of ways. First, it is based on the principle that education is young people's responsibility. It is up to them to pay for their education, whether by holding a job or getting into debt. It becomes a case of every man for himself. It is the law of the jungle. Society admits to no responsibility toward anyone and leaves it up to each individual to fend for himself.

This is not the principle which led to the establishment of the current loan and scholarship program in Canada. It was felt that education was a right and that society had to help young people enjoy that right. It was also felt that education was a social investment. Young people benefit from school training. Just take a look at the figures on job placement and unemployment;

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they will confirm that. As well, all the personal development and culture gained by young people will prove very useful throughout their lives. But providing an education to young people is also a social investment. The richest and most advanced societies from a socio-economic point of view are those where young people get the best education.

The loan and scholarship program in Canada was based on these premises. The federal and provincial governments were guided by the following principle when they got involved in loans and scholarships: each young person has the right to an education and that education is a social investment. This is why, in Canada, we made sure to keep tuition fees rather low, compared to what they are in some other countries. It is a societal decision, a choice we made as a society because we believe that our young people should get an education for their own benefit and that of society as a whole.

Therefore, I cannot support the motion before us because the hidden agenda seems to be to have students pay their own way. It is particularly striking in the part of the motion that my colleague from the Liberal Party wants to delete, the part that talks about reducing the cost to taxpayers and charging accumulated interest. Basically, the motion put forward by the hon. member for Calgary Southwest arises from a concern to save money for taxpayers and make sure that the government withdraw as much as possible from education financing.

(1755)

I think that there is a danger for students in there too and that is the danger of long-term indebtedness. Take for instance a student who has accumulated a debt of \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$25,000 while in school. If this student has the misfortune to have trouble finding a job, if he has the misfortune to be poor, he is going to be in debt for a very long time. Perhaps 10 years, maybe 15 or even 20. He will not have much of a chance to get out of debt, especially if, as suggested by our colleague from the Reform Party, we charge him accumulated interest on his debt.

I think that the danger for our young people is long term indebtedness. This is also an indirect way of forcing us to go along with the underlying spirit of minister Axworthy's reform, i.e. shift the financial burden of education on to the students by reducing government assistance in the form of scholarships and asking students to go into debt to get an education.

I think that a proposal like this one could have a negative effect on motivation to pursue their education. My experience as a teacher tells me that positive reinforcement is important if we want our young people to be motivated to get higher education and I think that putting in place an adequate grants and loans scheme plays a major part in this. So, this is why I shall vote

against the motion: because, in my opinion, it will institutionalize long term indebtedness for young people and it overlooks the need to maintain a scholarship system.

This motion also disregards the need to provide our young people with incentives to graduate as soon as possible, so as to keep government expenditures to a minimum. It is a matter of completing one's education in good time. If it takes three years to get a degree, take three years but not four, as some are tempted to do because they have to work their way through school.

To conclude, I think that what our young people need when they graduate is to find a good job they can live on and pay their school debts with, not to find themselves having to spend the next 10 to 15 years paying off debts.

[English]

Mr. McClelland: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe we have 10 minutes left to speak to the motion as 40 minutes were allotted.

Would it be in order for me to speak to the motion?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Right now I am dealing with the amendment. The House has heard the terms of the amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Laurin: Madam Speaker, can you tell us exactly what is going on with this amendment at this stage? Was it put to the House?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The amendment I have here is admissible. I just read it and we will add it later on.

Mr. Laurin: Is the amendment likely to be put to the House?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Yes.

(1800)

[English]

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that as a government member I am somewhat perplexed by the motion put forward by the leader of the Reform Party.

A clear look at the changes and amendments we made in the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act will show that we included the concept and notion of an income contingent loan repayment system. I would point out to members of the Reform Party that subsection 15.0 of the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act currently provides for the repayment of student loans by borrowers on an income contingent basis.

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Having said this, the government would like to take this opportunity to remind the House that thousands of students require financial assistance right now. A number of measures have been taken to help them in this regard.

It is important to remind the House that with the passage of the new Canada Student Financial Assistance Act in June last year, the government introduced important reforms to the Canada student loans program intended to support post-secondary education within a responsible fiscal framework. A number of these reforms are being phased in during the 1994-95 school year. The remainder will come into effect once the new act has been proclaimed.

I believe it is appropriate to remind the leader of the Reform Party and all hon. members about these measures which the government has taken to help students complete their education and become contributing members of Canadian society.

The loans limits had been frozen for 10 years, but they have now been increased. The weekly loan limit for full time students has moved from \$105 to \$165, an increase of approximately 57 per cent. The increase gives students up to \$5,610 per school year, rather than \$3,570. We also raised the ceilings on loans for part time students from \$2,500 to \$4,000. Part time students will no longer be required to repay the principal of their loans while they are studying. The changes give both young and mature students greater opportunities to fulfil their education.

Through consultations with the provinces and student groups, special opportunities grants for students with disabilities are being phased in. The government has allocated approximately \$5 million in 1994-95 for these grants which will also be available next year.

The government is also working with the provinces to explore ways that would help ensure that students who must borrow the most are not burdened with debt loads above what they can repay. In so doing, the government wishes to provide an incentive for success.

As well, low income borrowers may be eligible for interest relief up to 18 months following completion of their studies. This applies to workers who are not earning enough money to meet their monthly student loan payments. Such a provision is currently restricted to borrowers who are unemployed or temporarily disabled. We are working with the provinces to apply the Canada student loans program with greater consistency and fairness.

Levels of assistance are being addressed according to the individual student's needs. Changes are easing the financial burden on low to middle income families whose children deserve every opportunity to complete their education. Specifically in this regard, the parental contribution table has been revised to ease the burden on families.

Over the next five years, students will benefit from loans and grants in excess of \$6 billion. That is an increase of \$2.5 billion over the previous five years. This additional investment will give more than 1.45 million students access to post-secondary education during this same period which is an increase of approximately 200,000 students compared to the last five years.

(1805)

These new arrangements will reduce defaults and give students greater flexibility to repay and lower the costs for Canadian taxpayers. Lenders will now have more incentive to provide better services and offer income sensitive terms for repayment.

A more equitable system must go hand in hand with measures to reduce and control defaults. To that end, the program's eligibility criteria is being revised to emphasize results. Simply put, we will link financial assistance more closely to the student's successful completion of his or her studies. This will help to ensure the students who require financial assistance receive it.

Another aspect is we are collaborating with the provinces to develop consistent criteria for the educational institutions participating in the Canada student loans program. This too will ensure that aid is targeted wisely and costs are controlled.

The government is also carrying out discussions with lenders on new financing arrangements. The goal is to set terms that are realistic so borrowers will be able to repay their student loans relative to their income. This will improve the situation with respect to loan defaults, thus saving Canadians hard earned tax dollars.

One of the important things as members of Parliament is to relate the changes we make in this House to the community level, to the real lives and the real challenges that Canadians face. So that the people watching this debate have a clearer understanding of the type of impact it will have on their families, on the children and the students, I would like to give some brief illustrations of the type of positive changes we have introduced via the legislation cited earlier.

Let us take for example the case of Danielle who is attending the Technical University of Nova Scotia in Halifax. Danielle comes from a family of four whose annual income is \$44,000. Danielle's family cannot afford to contribute to her higher education but she has managed to work during the summer and save approximately \$1,800.

Her total assessed educational need is \$7,400. Under the old method of assessing need, Danielle would qualify for only \$2,600 in maximum aid. Under the new provision of the Canada student loans program, Danielle is now eligible for 60 per cent of her assessed need which is \$4,440. That is an increase of \$1,840. As for the remaining 40 per cent of assessed need, Danielle can apply to the province for additional assistance.

Royal Assent

Or let us take the case of Greg, a student with a disability who is attending the University of Guelph. Greg comes from the city of Vaughan, Ontario where his family earns an annual income of \$60,000. Greg's summer job enables him to put \$2,700 toward his education and his parents are able to contribute \$3,000. That gives him total financial resources of \$5,700 and a total assessed need of \$4,200.

Under the old system, Greg would qualify for a meagre \$500 in aid, but under the new system at 60 per cent of assessed need he would qualify for a maximum of \$2,520. However, Greg's disability means he is also eligible for a special opportunity grant of up to \$3,000.

These are positive changes that I am sure will improve the quality of life for many students throughout Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): It being 6.10 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put all questions necessary to dispose of Motion M-291 now before the House.

Mr. McClelland: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if I might have the unanimous consent of the House to speak to the bill for just a few moments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The House has heard the request. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The member has two minutes.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and colleagues in the House. I would like to address two items concerning this motion. I think it is of significant importance to get them on the books.

The first item is on the amendment to the motion. While it appears fairly innocuous and since virtually everyone in the House is onside on this, it is rather unseemly that it be introduced so late. It does not bind the government anyway because it is just a motion.

The other point I would like to raise concerns the income contingent loan repayment. Information today in the *Globe and Mail* says that Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick have decided they are not able to participate as it is presently written. Therefore, whatever we do with the income contingent loan repayment, which is a very good idea, the important element we must bear in mind is to be flexible.

As my colleagues know, we are going into a very difficult time financially. The future of our country depends on the ability of our young generation to be educated so they can use that education as a springboard for opportunity. Therefore, it is important that we look at the income contingent loan repayment in a very flexible, malleable manner if we have to change it. For instance interest may not be chargeable and that might be something we would look at.

I ask hon. colleagues to consider this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The first question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea?

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Pursuant to order made earlier today, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, March 21, 1995 at 5.30 p.m.

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Pursuant to the order made earlier today, the sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 6.15 p.m.)

[Translation]

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 9.14 p.m.

ROYAL ASSENT

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall Ottawa,

March 16, 1995

Madam Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Hon. Beverley McLachlin, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in her capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the 16th day of March, 1995, at 9.10 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain bills.

Yours sincerely,

Judith A. LaRocque
Secretary to the Governor General

A message was delivered by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Royal Assent

Madam Speaker, The Honourable the Deputy to the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

(2125)

And being returned:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate

Chamber the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the Royal Assent to the following bills:

Bill C-46, an Act to establish the Department of Industry and to amend and repeal certain other Acts—Chapter 1.

Bill C-74, an Act respecting the supervision of longshoring and related operations at west coast ports—Chapter 2.

[*English*]

It being 9.30 p.m., pursuant to orders made earlier this day, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9.30 p.m.)

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