

aggressive and motivated might decide that she wished to go into a combat role. Likewise, you might find a male in the forces who, perhaps, with other characteristics, wished to qualify as a cook or as a personnel officer or in some other position that perhaps was not related. The situation now is that women fill 25 per cent of the positions in the forces for which they are permitted to compete. We are creating, in other words, a job ghetto for women because before very long women will have filled all of the positions open to them and then they will no longer be able to increase their participation in the forces at all.

I would remind Hon. Members that in the RCMP where officers must constantly face the risk of danger, of violence on the part of criminals, we make no such distinction between women and men. Women officers take the same roles as males and, therefore, run the same risks of violence or injury as male officers in the RCMP. That is also true of women in the provincial and municipal police forces up and down this country. I would remind Hon. Members that there is no nuclear free zone in Canada where women might be hurt by the fall of a nuclear bomb. Therefore, as far as peacetime exposure to injury as a result of violent combat is concern, women are as vulnerable as men and civilians within Canada.

It seems to me that what is occurring here is that the Government is going to go along with the prejudices of people who are already in the Forces. The analogy has been given of the resistance of the American forces, perhaps ours too, to the integration of blacks into those forces after and during the Second World War. That was difficult at the time. It may be difficult to integrate women into certain roles in the Armed Forces today. Nonetheless, their success in the Armed Forces, and the fact that they are a relatively high proportion as compared to other Armed Forces indicate that this country has been a pace setter. Therefore, I ask why we must stop being a pace setter when it comes to giving equality rights to women in the Armed Forces of this country?

● (1750)

I suggest that the resolution put forward by my hon. friend, the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson), is strong and positive. It has already been endorsed by Members from all Parties who have studied this issue closely. I would ask that all Parties support this resolution and allow it to become the declared policy of the House and of the Parliament of Canada.

Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on the motion of the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson), my colleague on the Justice and Solicitor General Committee. I am also pleased to speak as a result of my experience as a member of the former Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. During our cross-country hearings last fall, when we went from one end of the country to the other, we had occasion not only to hear witnesses speak to the issue before our committee, we had occasion to visit a number of military bases in Canada as well as NORAD bases in the United States.

Equality Rights

From time to time, as part of the informal meetings with military personnel at those bases, I would ask both male and female members of the Armed Forces about this issue of women in combat roles. Frankly, I was surprised by the unanimity of opinion that was very much against any change in the *status quo*.

Therefore, I think it is important that we in the House examine the history and present status of women in combat roles in other jurisdictions when considering this motion.

The only modern experience of women being employed in combat in war was in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia with the partisans during the Second World War and in Israel in the late forties. In all three cases, we were talking about a defensive situation. There was an enemy in the homeland and an over-all shortage of people to face that enemy.

In the case of Israel in 1948, women were withdrawn from combat after only three weeks. At the end of hostilities, the other countries withdrew women from combat without explanation, and that restriction still stands.

[Translation]

Today in the Soviet Union it is estimated that women make up less than .5 per cent of the armed forces, all in non-combat roles.

[English]

Armed Forces throughout the world, without meaningful exception, do not employ women in combat roles. Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway are the only three countries in the world known to profess unlimited employment of women in their Armed Forces. The percentages of women in the Armed Forces in these countries, interestingly enough, are respectively only 3.8 per cent, 1.4 per cent, and 1.2 per cent. These countries maintain their Armed Forces with compulsory military service, but, paradoxically, this conscription applies only to men. In June, 1985, in all three of those countries, there were only 18 to 30 women in what the Canadian forces would classify as combat occupations. Another 65 or so were serving with combat units but in non-combat occupations such as radar operators with artillery units.

Studies are presently under way in our country to determine the standards for performance of duties within each military occupation. These tests, and data from other Armed Forces, indicate that about 90 per cent of male applicants meet the most demanding physical requirements for combat, but that only about 2 per cent of women applicants would qualify physically. If women were required to serve in all areas of the Armed Forces, it would be necessary to impose gender-free physical selection standards on all members since both men and women would have to perform all of the military tasks in the Canadian Armed Forces, including the most physically demanding. While gender-free physical selection standards would broaden the scope of roles for women who could meet these higher standards, it would certainly result in a military career being denied to the majority of Canadian women.