

*Industrial Status of Women**(Translation):*

Mr. Speaker, as I have just said in English, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Hamilton West for having moved this motion which embodies a principle I have always upheld during my 30 years in public life.

In my opinion there should be no difference between the salary paid to women and that paid to men. We have already discussed human rights in the house. The matter will be studied again and I believe we should grant the women of our country the right to receive equal pay for equal work.

Why should different salaries be paid? I have always wondered. If I take part in this debate, it is not so much to say that I support the principles of the motion but rather to voice my apprehension, because if we should follow the practice of paying lower wages to women who do the same kind of work, it might be prejudicial to male workers since it could lead certain employers to hire women whom they would pay less; this would be detrimental to heads of families who have the responsibility of providing for the needs of their dependents.

I have much respect and sympathy for the young woman who must help her family financially. I also have sympathy for widows who have to work. On the other hand, I have much less sympathy for those women who could refrain from working but who hold positions that could be filled by heads of families. I believe that the employment of women who do not have to work outside their home has some effect on the unemployment situation in general. Those women contribute to unemployment which has been increasing, and more particularly so during the past 15 or 20 years.

I am not challenging the right of anyone to work. I am not questioning the right of the woman to work in order to increase her husband's income or provide for certain personal needs. However, I must say that such a situation makes it more difficult to deal with the unemployment problem, in certain cases.

I know that some employers who are not too scrupulous hire women precisely because they pay them less than male workers for equal work. I have no lesson to give to anyone, but I believe that employers themselves should give special attention to this matter and be a little more conscientious when they have to hire workers.

[Mr. Dupuis.]

Even if we agreed to the bill as introduced by the hon. member for Hamilton West, such legislation could only be applied in the field coming under federal jurisdiction. It would be a good step forward. We surely cannot deprive the provinces of their right to legislate in labour matters, except, it goes without saying, in those fields specifically mentioned in the Canadian constitution, where the federal government has priority.

However, I take part in this debate once again to call the attention not only of the federal government but also of the governments of the other provinces and of employers, to the advisability of granting women the same rights as men, but above all of helping to solve the unemployment problem. They should understand that in certain cases it would be better to pay a man the salary attaching to a certain type of work rather than give employment to a woman and pay her less.

I would now like to quote the very comforting words of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg). I note that the federal government applies the principle of equal pay for equal work, which is all to its credit. I now quote what the Minister of Labour said at page 1088 of *Hansard*:

Since that time the Department of Labour has made a study of the comparative wages of men and women in the same or similar job classifications in enterprises which come under federal jurisdiction. As members of the house are aware, in our civil service the salaries within any particular classification are exactly the same, whether for men or women. With respect to those working for the federal government at prevailing rates, it is the practice of my department to recommend that the rate for a classification be the same regardless of whether the work is performed by a man or a woman under the same job title. Taking these things together, I think I can say that this government and my department certainly do stand for the principle here enunciated.

I shall not say any more on the subject because I do not believe we will be able to solve this problem during this session or even during many other sessions. However, I once again draw the attention of the government to the matter of equal pay for equal work and I take this opportunity to assert that this principle cannot be debated too often if we want to do away with the discrimination affecting employees in certain fields of employment.

Again I congratulate the hon. member for Hamilton West and I wish to tell her that I do so without reservation because I have upheld this principle during the 30