

the range of rich benefits that we deny ourselves by restricting so severely and casting so rigidly relations between men and women? Do we think of one another as persons?

In sexual discrimination, as in racial discrimination, the stature of the person discriminating suffers as much as that of the person discriminated against. Both persons are losers in the process.

And society is the loser as well. The entire community is denied the contributions of large numbers of women in capacities that we in Canada for decades have regarded as masculine preserves. There is no evidence, for example, that the standards of health-care in the Soviet Union, or the durability of Soviet bridges, are less than what they might be because of the large -- in one instance, overwhelming -- number of women in the medical and engineering professions. There is no evidence that the people of India, of Ceylon, of Israel are less well served by governments headed by female prime ministers than would be the case had men retained those offices. Indeed, from my own recent meetings with Prime Ministers Gandhi, Bandaranaike and Meir, I would suggest that the evidence is quite the other way. Yet in Canada we have permitted ourselves to develop attitudes which are hostile to the reception of women into a number of professions and trades and into politics. In the result, each one of us, men and women, is demeaned.

Attitude has been the contributor of most of the obstacles which now confront women in Canada. But more than a change of attitude is required in order to overcome discrimination and to provide opportunity. Some laws will have to be changed to eliminate the anomalies and inconsistencies which have crept into our common-law system from days when women were regarded as legal chattels -- regarded, virtually, as the property of their husbands.

We should examine with care all aspects of equality and partnership embodied in the marital state. Some special protections and features will always be necessary, but we should be performing a disservice if we introduced into our laws even more inconsistencies, as could happen by the adoption, say, of both the concept of community of property and the suggestion of state payments to wives for household services.

Some of this necessary examination of the status of women has recently been performed, and performed very well, by the Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Florence Bird. The Commission recommended a number of changes which it regards as essential in order to continue the process of placing women on an even footing with men. Forty of the 167 recommendations are directed to levels of government other than the Federal Government. A number of others are directed to the private sector, and to agencies such as the Senate and the House of Commons, which are not within governmental control. The balance, however, are recommendations for the consideration of the Federal Government, either by itself or in conjunction with the provinces or territories.

In the short interval since the report was tabled, a number of steps have been taken to ensure informed and co-ordinated Federal Government action in response to it. Most important of those steps is the Government's announced decision to give priority consideration to the recommendations.