

*The Address—Mrs. Finestone*

[English]

Change, Mr. Speaker, must begin at the very centre of government decision-making, in Cabinet's own Priorities and Planning Committee. It seems incongruous that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women is not a bona fide Member who participates directly in the discussions and decisions of this key group. The Government risks the charge that its attention to the significant concerns of Canadian women is little more than tokenism, for it excludes them from the heart of policy-making.

Thus far, the gaps between campaign promises and the reality of the Throne Speech are troubling, Mr. Speaker. First, employment; the promise was for mandatory affirmative action in the public sector and for implementing equal pay for work of equal value. The promise was for contract compliance in the case of companies seeking federal government contracts. The Throne Speech now tells us that the reality is further study of equal pay for work of equal value. The reality is silence on contract compliance.

Second, child care is a basic right for women in their struggle for economic independence. It is a cornerstone of their right to work. The Government has sent a confused and alarming message to Canadian women in its overly cautious decision to send these questions to a parliamentary committee when the recommendations of an independent childcare task force are to be tabled this December. Before trying to reinvent the wheel and waste public monies, this parliamentary committee should examine the reports available from these experts whose work on the childcare task force is about to be ended, and then make the decision as to whether it really needs to continue the study.

[Translation]

Third, there is the crucial issue of the pension system. Must I remind this Government that only one third of Canadian working women have a pension plan? Will they be added to the poorest group in our population, women aged over 65? The necessary studies and consultations have already taken place under the previous Government. What Canadian women ask this Government is that it act now.

[English]

Fourth, the concern about pornography is a matter of urgency. When the Fraser report is tabled, swift action by Government must follow. Similarly with the important Badgley Commission report on sexual abuse of children in Canada. We must work with the courts, the provinces, and with medical and community groups to prevent child abuse. There are helpful steps to take at once, sending a signal of hope.

Fifth, we should not forget single elderly women. Community responsibility, which was alluded to in the Speech from the Throne, gives reference to community-based health care, which is a genuinely laudable notion. The Government should assure elderly citizens of appropriate financial, social and medical care so that they can remain in their homes, continuing to be active and contributing members of society. Do not

tamper with the universality of certain programs which form the base of their sense of security.

[Translation]

In this regard, the decision of the Government to extend the survivor's allowance to widows and widowers aged between 60 and 64 is a step in the right direction. However, the fact remains that the Government should have a more comprehensive view. Such a proposal discriminates against single senior citizens. Among them are 200,000 women who would not be eligible to pension before the age of 65.

[English]

These are the women's issues which were addressed in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. I regret to say that the signal to women in the Throne Speech is a "blue alert". What has the Government really told us it would do? It will re-examine the concept of equal pay for work of equal value; back off on affirmative action; procrastinate on contract compliance; study rather than act on child care; discuss rather than act on pension reform; take no major action in agriculture which affects so many farm women; cut \$9.6 million in social housing. These things are all crucial to the life of millions of Canadians, particularly Canadian women, be they single parents, those with large families or the elderly. These are not encouraging signals, Mr. Speaker. This really is a Government of broken promises.

What signals is the Government sending to the young? It does not give them the crucial hope of pursuing their studies or finding a good job to see them through this winter and the forthcoming summer. It gives them a Minister of State for Youth who is responsible for furthering the International Year of Youth and has only the power to advocate in their interests, in other words, a Minister who cannot protect their potential for jobs now. Where is this Government's promise of jobs, jobs, jobs? The Government abolishes the Summer Canada Program and freezes the level of Canada student loans to save \$5 million. Among other cuts, it eliminates totally the Young Workers' Exchange Program, which I find particularly ironic in this International Year of Youth. The discussion paper on training announced by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald), by which she hopes to promote consultation with the provinces, may develop a good long-term plan. Nonetheless, this must not constrain short-term action and direct job creation to avoid a very bleak winter.

● (1700)

Besides providing direct job creation programs, the previous Government made major strides in the area of training. For all its talk of giving hope to Canadians, this Government offers obscure promises in some dim future. To ignore the immediate needs of unemployed youth is short-sighted and a mockery. This is not the change they voted for.

While my official position is that of critic for women and youth, I cannot let this moment pass without a comment on our cultural minorities. The Canadian idea is complex. It is our native people, it is French and English. It is the wealth of cultures that more recent Canadians have brought us. To this