

*Supply*

clause providing for the right to have affirmative action programs and recognizing the principle of equality, was adopted by the Parliament of Canada at the initiative of a Liberal Government. Mr. Speaker, we must remember that no Conservative Governments ever suggested we enshrine a charter of rights in the Canadian Constitution. We must remember that Conservative Governments across the country objected to the Charter and obliged us to include a notwithstanding clause which is now being used to abuse the rights of female workers in Quebec. Finally, let us not forget that, thanks to a Liberal Government, the basic rights of women in Canada are now enshrined in the Canadian Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe the Government broke new ground a number of years ago by appointing a Minister responsible for the Status of Women. In the Conservative Governments in Canada today, there are no ministers responsible for the status of women, a position that exists only in the Péquiste Government in Quebec. Granted, some departments have a director of the status of women but as far as having a ministerial spokesman for women in Conservative or NDP cabinets across the country, I am sorry to say that the provincial record is pretty negative.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention a series of measures that have been taken. In only three years, we now have a Cabinet that includes two women, we have a woman as Speaker of the House, on the Government side, and ten women as Liberal Members, compared to three Conservatives and three New Democratic Party Members. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I do not think we have to apologize for our record.

It was also a Federal Liberal Government that formed a special committee to examine the question of violence perpetrated on women in Canada. Following the committee's impressive report, that same Government provided funds through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and I must say that I am pleased to be able to take advantage of this program, which will provide a transition house for women in my riding, that is, the Maison l'Escalier for the women of Montreal-Mercier.

● (1610)

I would also like to mention that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has prepared special courses for officers who may be called in to intervene in the case of violence in the family. I think that excellent work has been done by our colleagues within the committee, but a number of measures must be taken by the provinces, because social services fall under provincial jurisdiction. I am still waiting to see all these provincial programs that will address the problems of women in Canada.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, we had a number of consultations on pensions. In fact, I think that all studies on the issue have clearly demonstrated that in this area, women are not being treated equally. I think it is a controversial issue which is difficult to raise and even more so during a recession, but here

again I hope that the provincial authorities will see the light and realize that women in Canada must have decent living conditions when they reach retirement age.

Since my colleague from Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) raised the question of vocational training, Mr. Speaker, I must point out that the new legislation does enable us to offer courses. However, we must not lose sight of provincial jurisdictions and section 93 of the Constitution which provides that education is under provincial responsibility. We cannot offer courses unless they are authorized by the province. I know what I am talking about because I am from Quebec where I was member and president of a school board for six years. God knows that my school board did organize many vocational training courses, and since the new act is more flexible, we will be able to offer courses which will enable women to apply for jobs in the years 2000 in the fields of computers, automation and other sciences of the future.

Another thing to the credit of our Government, Mr. Speaker, is the part-time work committee chaired by Mrs. Wallace. I am looking forward to the findings of that committee, Mr. Speaker, because I think that the Canadian women who want to continue to raise their children will have a means or a mechanism to combine work and child rearing without being deprived of the benefits derived from work when time has come to retire.

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution is also the launching pad of several affirmative action programs now in force in various Departments. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has taken a leading role in that field, and I hope that the provinces and the private sector will benefit from the experience of federal Departments. Still, I would remind my colleagues opposite that the initiative was again taken by the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, I come now to a delicate question for women in Canada—family allowances. We are aware that the Hon. Member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie), who is a candidate for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party, has already mentioned the possibility of establishing a selective program. I would remind Hon. Members that the family allowances program is a universal program for all Canadian women for as long as married women fail to achieve equal status within the family. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I must point out that it is because this comes under provincial jurisdiction that married women are still considered dependents legally.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to deal with current issues such as pornography on television which was raised because one station decided to broadcast programs which Canadian feminist groups consider pornographic. While this issue has become very emotional, I must say that, without violating the Charter of rights, which provides freedom of speech, we shall be able to develop in co-operation with Canadian producers a code of ethics without bringing us back to the Dark Ages