

Status of Women

Mr. Muir: There is something Irish there, too.

Mr. Fairweather: All right. That is tokenism. We all understand that Canada lags far behind most countries in the world when it comes to having women represented in public life. The government's employment of women in senior positions in public life is, I believe, a scandal and disgrace. I assume that this committee will be doing something, even though it may mean quotas, to a limited extent, to end what is a serious and scandalous imbalance in this area. As government and parliament are bellweathers in employment practices, I hope that industry, which also has a reprehensible record in this regard, will deal with this matter quickly.

The council is but a beginning. The royal commission recommended:

... that the federal government immediately take steps to enter into agreement with the provinces leading to the adoption of a national Day-Care Act under which federal funds would be made available on a cost-sharing basis for the building and running of day-care centres meeting specified minimum standards, the federal government to (a) pay half the operating costs; (b) during an initial seven-year period, pay 70 per cent of capital costs; and (c) make similar arrangements for the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

● (1440)

It is a pity that when the minister made his announcement about the composition of the board, although he was specifically requested by women of the Yukon, there is no representation from the Yukon on the committee.

My leader has advocated in eloquent terms the need for the establishment of a human rights commission. I hope this recommendation will be brought forward very quickly by the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: Speaking on behalf of my party, Mr. Speaker, I welcome the appointment. I hope the committee will become established quickly. I hope its members never let up on their recommendations to the government and that they push this minister until he wonders why he ever made the appointments.

Finally, the minister mentioned pension plan changes. If these changes do not include the right of the housewives of this country to make contributions to and, therefore, to be eligible for pensions under the Canada Pension Plan, that will be a serious gap in the legislation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: I can assure Dr. Katie Cooke and the new council they will have enthusiastic support from this parliament if they push the Minister of Labour to the end of his endurance.

Mr. Stuart Leggett (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, we in this party do not welcome this announcement if it is mere tokenism as I strongly suspect. In fact, from examining the 28 appointments it can be seen that it is clearly tokenism as only one male was appointed to the council. This demonstrates the continuing attitude of this government not to take this subject as seriously as it should.

[Mr. Fairweather.]

Injustice and discrimination continue in this country in terms of employment opportunities, wage levels and promotion. This is nothing short of scandalous. It is particularly true of the federal civil service where an infinitesimal number of senior positions are held by women.

The recommendation of the royal commission is being avoided by not having this body report to parliament. The procedure being followed will in fact only provide protection for the minister through the council. That is not what is needed. What is needed is parliamentary action and a direct report to parliament.

We welcome the proposed changes in the pension and insurance schemes, in the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act and the Public Service Superannuation Act. However, we must remember that most of this work has already been done by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and it is unnecessary to do a complete overlap. What is necessary is legislative action and not delay.

I might say I am pleased to represent a British Columbia constituency that has two women cabinet ministers and a woman deputy premier.

I repeat that this is tokenism. We have very serious doubts that all the recommendations of the royal commission will be quickly implemented as they ought to be. This is a poor substitute for action.

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, if the creation of an advisory council on the status of women can help change the discriminatory attitude towards women and encourage as well her emancipation and fulfilment, it could prove to be an efficient move.

Though we dislike any type of crusade for the equality of the two sexes, we must admit that prejudice still exists in this regard.

As for us, the Social Credit Party of Canada, who preach with deep conviction the freedom of human beings, we advocate the quality of all individuals, regardless of their race, nationality or sex.

We can only hope that women will contribute even more to the formulation of our laws, the administration of our country and the general progress of society.

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[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I rise to propose a motion under Standing Order 43. The urgent and pressing necessity arises out of the revelation that the government has repudiated the basis on which it gained the support of the House, including the budget which gave first priority to the reduction of unemployment and inflation. If the House gives unanimous consent, I will move, seconded by the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Bell):

That this House does hereby request a copy of a document incorporating the cabinet decision to relegate government action