

*Supply**[English]*

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, my French is so rusty these days that I will do the wise thing and talk to him in a language that I know a bit about. I will make a promise to him that I will get back to my long neglected French.

I thank him for his kind comments about my speech. I share very much his views on the importance of the family unit. I thought he articulated it very eloquently a moment ago and I salute him for that.

As to the motion he was talking about, I plead ignorance. I do not remember the details of it and I will not pretend that I do. He put his finger, and rightly so, on one of the many areas in which this government needs to move.

● (1340)

I have always been appalled that remuneration has been on the basis of sex; that females have been getting lower wages for performing the same services. There are thousands of examples of that. I have been appalled that people are paid differently because they live in one region versus another. Two wrongs do not make a right. These disparities have to be corrected.

We are on the matter of women's issues today. I do not like the term. They are all our issues, but I know what is meant by the term.

The member flagged an issue that I pursue and will continue to pursue. The matter of the disparity of wages is untenable and we have to move to correct it as soon as possible.

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I do not appreciate or accept the tenor of the motion presented for debate by the hon. member for Quebec, I recognize and thank her for giving us the opportunity to talk about such an important aspect as the quality of the connection that Canadian women have to the social and economic infrastructure of Canadian society.

It is a critical topic. As one of the 50 some women elected to the House it is incumbent on me to do whatever I can to encourage our governments and our legislature to understand where that connection is and make it better.

In her motion the hon. member focuses specifically on the economic connection, the economic side of the connection that we as women have to Canadian society. We have to speak about both the economic and social support that we as women need if we are to participate fully and completely in Canadian society and offer a bettering of the society through skills, abilities and qualities we bring as women.

In understanding the connection between social and economic development I turn to September of last year when I had the opportunity as a member of the parliamentary delegation to the United Nations conference on population and development to

understand quite fully the impact development has on population.

We did a lot of very good work at the conferences that were the preliminary to those debates in Cairo to encourage an understanding of the impact development has on population management, more specifically to understand that when we talk about development we do and must talk about both social and economic development.

We played a very significant role in helping the world understand that it is the strong connections that women must have to both the social and economic supports that exist in a society that will in turn improve the development and the productivity of a nation and then in turn enhance and help manage population control.

We were essentially talking about development in developing nations. As I worked with and talked to colleagues from around the world I realized this debate is still going on in all developed nations. Canada is at a different level because of the hard and dedicated work of many Canadian women. When we think of the women who work so hard to get us recognized as persons not so very long ago, they helped move us to the position we are in now.

● (1345)

I think of some of my friends. Doris Anderson worked outside the government sector with non-governmental organizations and as a publisher of a well-known women's magazine. I think of the work she has done. I think of Lucie Pépin, a friend and colleague, a former member of Parliament who has worked so hard on behalf of women's issues. All these women have brought us, as a developed nation, to a point that is different from those of the developing nations.

The conversations we had in Cairo focused on the need for women to commit, with development on the social side, to very basic things when it comes to health: access to tetanus, polio and tuberculosis cures and shots, access to clean water. Basic health measures are what they need.

When we were talking about education we were talking about access to primary school education. When we were talking about access to economic support we were talking about the basic notion that it was okay for women to work outside the confines of the defined home as we know it.

For us in the developed nation of Canada, we are talking about things of a different sort at a different level. It is not so much basic health issues but issues of research for women and the impact of breast cancer and the impact of heart disease.

When we are talking about education we are encouraging our young women to complete high school and post-secondary education. When we are thinking about other social aspects such as safety and comfort, not only in our streets but in our own homes, we are having to understand family violence and to