

Private Members' Business

These women work mainly at home. Their husbands, children and other family members benefit most directly from their work, but they are not the only ones. Thus, paying a salary to women who remain at home would stimulate the economy because they would spend this money on basic necessities such as better food, more durable clothes and so on.

Employers also benefit in other ways from women at home. The fact that women at home run the household and look after the other members of the family makes it easier for their husbands to devote all their energies to a gainful, full-time job outside the home.

Finally, in a more general way, women at home prepare the future in that they are raising the next generation of citizens. To reproduce generation after generation, we need a dynamic, healthy population.

What price should we put on the work of these women who are on the front lines 24 hours a day to do everything? It is estimated that if housework were included in the gross national product, it would amount to 35 or 40 per cent of the GNP, or at least \$136 billion.

That is a lot of money. Yet women at home have no way of converting this work into cash. Unlike other workers in our society, women at home are not paid a salary. And because they are unpaid, they have no days off, no unemployment insurance and no accident, disability or sickness benefits. Even more serious in the long run, they do not have a pension plan.

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But like all other workers, women at home do reach retirement age too. There comes a time when they can no longer perform all the tasks they used to. What happens then? After serving their families and society for all those years, many women at home end their days in poverty. It is sad to see the personal economic contribution of these women go completely unrecognized.

The former Social Credit member, Mr. Lambert, who lives in Berthier-sur-Mer, was telling me today that no government has ever calculated how much the work of women at home is worth. Ms. Judith Richard, who was an assistant to the late Réal Caouette and whom I met

today at the same time, told me to convey the same message to the people of Canada.

It is unacceptable that women at home live in financial insecurity all their lives, especially when they reach retirement age, after a lifetime of working for their families and society as a whole. Mothers who decide to start working, often under poor conditions, do so because they receive no salary to stay at home, raise children and do all the work that entails. This is extra work on top of the work they still have to do at home.

Mothers are divided into two categories: working mothers and mothers who stay at home full time. Even those expressions are charged with emotion. If some women are working mothers, what are women who do not work? If some women are full-time mothers, does that mean that those who work outside the home are part-time mothers?

Housewives do not get any personal benefits under the Canada Pension Plan or the Quebec Pension Plan. Proposals aimed at sharing pension credits between spouses are good, but they do not take into account the value of the work performed by the housewife, since the couple's total pension is not increased.

Kathy Cooke said that women who stay at home sacrifice the production capacity of half our potential active labour force.

It is obvious that, for some people, the words "employment" and "work" apply to everything except the situation of mothers who stay at home.

Here is what was written on a recent census form from the government of Saskatchewan: If you have worked at home all your life, indicate never worked. People think that value and money are synonymous.

Mr. Gérard Amyotte, program director at Health and Welfare Canada's Social Service Programs Branch wrote this: "Often times, women who stay at home with their children are not considered as workers because they receive no salary. In our society, unpaid work is often not recognized and not appreciated. Social values are focused on the worth of an individual as measured by his or her professional status or pay cheque, instead of the amount of time spent on caring for others".