

*Status of Women Study*

simply liberalizing the abortion law will not solve anything.

There has been a statistical battle, a battle of figures, going on all this winter between the extremists on this issue, those who want abortion on demand and those who feel, very sincerely and genuinely in my opinion, that there should be no alteration in the law. I beseech the government that when this issue is considered by us, Members of Parliament should be allowed to vote as individual members according to their consciences.

I have already used a great deal of the time allotted to me, but there are five or six other issues which remain. The report suggested the government study the idea of permitting the spouse at home to contribute as a self-employed worker to the Canada and Quebec pension plans. There are other recommendations affecting family allowances and taxation. The difficulty here is that the recommendations run counter to the approach taken by the government in the white paper on income security. The idea of a taxable bonus in respect of every child under 16 has met opposition from those who believe that the world population explosion should be discouraged, not encouraged. The recommendation did not place a limit on the number of children in respect of which a mother could receive \$500.

The recommendations go on. For instance, the minimum age for marriage should be 18; the Divorce Act should be amended so that the three-year separation period now provided would be reduced to one year. Then, there is a very helpful section on the whole question of a guaranteed annual income, whether by way of negative income tax or by a rationalization of payments. As I have mentioned, there is a recommendation in relation to public office; it is recommended that a certain number of seats in the Senate be reserved for women. Personally, I do not accept this recommendation believing it to be an extension of the very discrimination which the report seeks to avoid. Then there is the point which was well-made by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin); it has been made by others engaged in the practice of the law, namely, that prostitution should be regarded as a social, not as a criminal problem. That part of the Criminal Code which deals with vagrancy, section 64(1) (c), is discriminatory because it singles out women and restricts the right of women to move about in freedom. Surely, at this stage in man's evolution the section to which I have referred should be changed.

The report contains some plans for action. It speaks of establishing implementation committees at federal, provincial and municipal levels composed of senior administrators and so on. It suggests the establishment of a human rights commission at federal, provincial and territorial government levels. It looks to the establishment of a permanent Status of Women Council, national in scope. I agree with the point made by the hon. member for Greenwood: there should be one minister responsible for the on-going aspects of this report. The government cannot allow this report to lie fallow.

As stated by the Canadian Federation of University Women, the issues which arise are not beyond the area of

[Mr. Fairweather.]

interest or concern of any Member of Parliament. The concerns we discuss today are real concerns felt by real people. If I have a minute left for philosophy, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help noticing the aptness of a quotation by Tom Wicker in the *New York Times* who reminded us of an occasion when Robert Penn Warren spoke wittily of the forgetfulness, among politicians, of real issues. He was commenting on American poetry. Marianne Moore had said her kind of poetry deals with real toads in imaginary gardens. The kind of poetry in Congress, and it would not be stretching it too much to include this parliament, might often seem very similar to hers. It deals with real solutions to imaginary problems. Occasionally, it deals with imaginary solutions to real problems. Sometimes, however, and this is where genius begins to be inflamed, it deals with imaginary solutions to imaginary problems of imaginary people. If that kind of poeticizing could not touch us where we live, Robert Penn Warren asks us, then what can? The answer is easy: any kind that is real, for the disease of our time is the sense of being cut off from reality. Man feels that a screen has descended between him and nature, between him and other men, between him and himself.

What I have been trying to do is to discuss this issue first from a little bit of a philosophical view followed by an appraisal of the Commission's report, some statistics to give the necessary thrust, and then an identification of the more important recommendations. As I have suggested, the government ought to designate a minister to be responsible for the co-ordination and implementation of the recommendations. The partnership of which I spoke at the beginning of my speech, the new partnership between women and men rather than a struggle of women against men, prompts us to recognize that women want to be treated as people, as full human beings. There must be a new regard for women's traditional occupations, within and outside the home. Otherwise there is a very real danger that we shall lose what is most precious in human life, the ability to give devoted and cherishing care to other human beings, just at a time in human history when it is most imperative that we learn how to expand our capacity for caring and translate it into ways of protecting the earth itself.

• (4:00 p.m.)

We have been told how to begin, Mr. Speaker; let us then begin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Matte (Champlain):** Mr. Speaker, first may I thank the mover of this motion which allows us to state our views on the status of women in Canada.

Many comments have been made already on the report of the Royal Commission, but those of the people's representatives are obviously very important since the Canadian electorate has give us legislative power.

When we speak of the status of women in Canada, we must go back to what precisely started this talk. For centuries, our eastern mentality has been conditioned to a factual situation. Woman is not the equal of man. The analysis of what brought our world to this line of