

government is doing has surpassed his respect for the facts. The facts as they exist are certainly no basis for self-congratulation or complacency, and I do not think the minister would say they were or indeed said that they were. On the contrary, the facts give cause for concern and a greater sense of urgency than the minister conveyed this afternoon—a sense of urgency which I believe the government does not possess.

Among women in Canada there is a very wide range of concerns relating to equality of status. I propose to limit myself pretty substantially to women in the world of work in this country. The minister cited some figures to show that not much progress has been made in Canada. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women has published figures to illustrate that the actual number and participation rate of women in the labour force is steadily increasing. Canada's rate remains significantly lower than that of Australia, West Germany, the United States, Britain, Japan and Sweden.

Furthermore, in Canada working women are concentrated—not entirely but there is a heavier concentration—in central Canada, with Ontario having the highest rate, and a high percentage of women work in service industries with occupations in clerical, service and sales positions. I do not want to suggest for a moment, by inference, that there is anything wrong with a woman staying at home and looking after her family if that is her choice, freely made. There is no more honourable occupation and career for a woman to pursue, and she should have the free choice to do that or to go to work.

In Canada, working women are younger and more often single than are working men. For women who must care for pre-school age children, the obstacles to steady and progressively more rewarding employment are enormous. As I understand it, child-care centres meet only 1 per cent of the need. Therefore, many women are limited in the hours that are available to them for work outside the home. Conditions are difficult for expectant mothers as well as for existing mothers. Maternity leave provisions are for the most part, as I understand it, quite unsatisfactory. Maternity benefits paid through unemployment insurance have been inequitable and we are pleased to see some improvement proposed in the bill before us.

There is no question that the definition as it existed, of 15 weeks for benefit eligibility, has been poor legislation. In the proposed flexibility the 15-week period will make a good deal more sense to all mothers, including mother nature. How in the world, under the existing section of the act, was a woman supposed to know her date of delivery eight weeks in advance? How she was supposed to know has certainly been a source of mystery to me as a father of four children.

It may very well be that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) appointed the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey)—who was the minister responsible for the department in question at the time the unemployment insurance provision was made—out of respect for the hon. gentleman's ability to forecast delivery eight weeks later. The sad part is that if the lady in question did not guess right in the game of what you might call reproduction roulette, she would suffer an economic penalty in her unemployment insurance benefits. That has been bad law and we

Status of Women

will be delighted to see it expunged from the Canadian statutes. The improvement proposed in this bill does not, however, in any way remove the need for a comprehensive review of this country's unemployment insurance program—something which has been long promised by this government—a program which it is now forecast will cost between \$3 billion and \$3.5 billion this year. The maternity benefits paid out will constitute only a small fraction of that amount.

● (1600)

I referred a few moments ago to the facts and to the realities which are with us, but they do not seem to impress the minister quite as much as they impress me. There is no shortage of either data or conclusions on the subject of the status of women in Canadian society. I do not intend to be exhaustive this afternoon, and I pray I will not be exhausting, but in my remarks I do hope to cover enough ground with enough emphasis to make a dent in any self-satisfaction anyone in this House might happen to have with regard to the progress we have made toward equality of the status of women in the world of work in Canada.

In looking at the situation as it exists today I will be making use of research material from four sources. One source is the February 1, 1974, report of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. There is detailed study of women in business by Jones E. Bennett and Pierre M. Loewe which is being featured in a current series in the *Financial Post*. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation conducted an internal task force study in 1974 on the status of women in that organization. Fourth there was information provided to the miscellaneous estimates committee by Mrs. Irene Johnson, one of three capable women holding the rank of deputy minister in the service of this government.

Quite a disturbingly consistent picture emerges when all these four sources are examined. One gets an impression of how things are going in the strictly private and strictly public sectors as well as in the mixed context of organizations such as large federal Crown corporations. Across the board the picture is not encouraging. This is what we find in very recent canvasses: the "typical" Canadian private firm has major inadequacies of equal opportunity, particularly in terms of job access and of compensation. The *Financial Post* study cites these inadequacies in this way: due to historical labour patterns of today's "unwritten law," some jobs remain "men's" and others are "women's." Since "men's" jobs are generally of a higher status than "women's," women make less money, are less likely to be trained, have fewer advancement opportunities and hold a small proportion of decision-making power.

Contrary to popular belief, "ghettoization" of Canadian working women has become worse. This is a hard thing to have to say, but I think it has to be said. It has become worse, not better, over the last decade. For example, the proportion of clerks who are women rose 3 percentage points in that decade. In Canadian business, the average woman earns 45 per cent less than the average man, and I believe the gap actually worsened between 1972 and 1973. A female Canadian worker is 2½ to three times less likely to be trained than a male. Advancement opportunities for