

The Address—Mrs. Erola

Who can doubt that this Party is the strongest and most passionate voice for Canadian women?

Mr. Nowlan: Doris Anderson.

Mr. Malone: I can.

Mrs. Erola: Who can doubt our commitment?

Let us get down to it then, shall we, with the Conservative Party? Never, never has the appellation, "conservative" been more appropriate than to describe the attitude of that Party to women's issues. Let me cite a few examples provided by no more objective a source than the Conservative Party. The questionnaire results of the—

Mr. Nowlan: We had the first woman Minister, Ellen Fairclough.

Mrs. Erola:—of the national Party held May 13 to 16—before I go into the results of that questionnaire I should like to quote a paragraph from the letter that accompanied it. It reads:

The enclosed results will no doubt prove to be an important source of information for the Leader and the Caucus as they map out a plan for governing our nation.

I hope all Members of the House are seated because the figures I will quote are enough to floor any politician.

On the subject of affirmative action, 75 per cent of Conservatives do not think that women should be entitled to special employment measures. On daycare, 74 per cent of Conservatives feel that daycare funding should not be increased. In fact, of that figure 37 per cent believe it should be decreased. Regarding child care expenses deductions, 41 per cent feel it should not be increased and a further 15 per cent believe it should actually be reduced. On family allowance, incredibly, 62 per cent believe this fundamental assistance to mothers raising children should be cut, and regarding crisis centres, 48 per cent are opposed to increased support, while 25 per cent would actually cut funding.

Is it a surprise, Mr. Speaker, that the women of Canada do not trust the Conservative Party? It is no wonder there is such a wide discrepancy between the percentage of male and female backers of the Conservative Party. What hope is there for Canadian women when the poll results show that there is no commitment to them? How can the women of Canada cast their lot with a Party which would put employment advances for women into reverse, add weight to the burden of working mothers, abandon the needs of women facing violence in the home and slash funding for safety net programs that are so important? The women of Canada do not want to get together for a drink sometime with the Leader of the Conservative Party (Mr. Mulroney) to talk about their pressing needs and concerns. They know already where that Party stands on these issues, and judging from what we know already, there is not much support, and a great deal to fear, coming from the Tories.

• (1540)

To wrap up, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne adds new initiatives to this Government's record of acting on the needs of Canadian women. I have already indicated that we are increasing our funding for women's groups. Pension reform will continue as the Government reacts to the recommendations of the pensions task force. Divorce reforms are under way. I will continue to meet and consult with my provincial colleagues on such matters as daycare and violence. Much remains to be done, Mr. Speaker, but I submit that this Government is activist, is a strong Government which believes in justice for all Canadians and backs its commitments with actions.

Miss Carney: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister to clarify a few points made in her speech. Before that, I should point out that both men and women west of the Red River valley do not support this Government. I know the Minister would not knowingly mislead the House so I wanted to ensure that she acknowledges the fact that the first woman Speaker was not appointed by the Liberal Government. The first woman Speaker was appointed by the Clark Government which appointed a woman as Speaker of the Senate. It was a Conservative Government which appointed the first woman Cabinet Minister of any portfolio, and it was also a Conservative Government which appointed the first woman Secretary of State for External Affairs, a senior post. I do not feel that the Minister would seek to mislead her constituents on such an important matter.

My specific question deals with her comment about justice for Canadian women. If she seeks justice for Canadian women, could she explain to me why the divorce legislation presented before the House is so ineffective in the treatment of maintenance orders, which is one of the most important burdens which women face in this country? I understand there is provincial jurisdiction involved. However, clearly this legislation is not adequate when it comes to dealing with the terrible situation which women in this country face when they cannot have maintenance orders enforced. It is the single most important reason for the poverty of single-parent families headed by women. In view of the Minister's comments, could she explain why the legislation does not deal adequately with that?

Further, in view of her comments about degrading and dehumanizing people, could the Minister explain to me why she actively, forcibly and with full knowledge of the problems involved, stopped or opposed the House of Commons majority report on prostitution, particularly the item on protecting juveniles, the kids of 13, 14 and 15, protecting our kids who are on the streets of our major centres? She forcefully opposed that measure.

Mrs. Erola: Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with all of the issues raised by the Hon. Member seriatim. First of all, I feel it is obvious to the House that there was no attempt to mislead the House when I referred to the former Speaker of the House who was, indeed, the first Speaker in this Chamber. I will