

Routine Proceedings

legislation. But let us not forget that while governments can lead, there must be leadership through a broad range of activities in our community.

Discrimination against women violates the basic principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity that are the due of all citizens of our planet.

[*Translation*]

I am confident that, despite difficulties and setbacks, Canada will continue to set an example towards the elimination of obstacles that inhibit the ability of women to achieve their full potential as participants in, and contributors to, society.

[*English*]

Women have much to take pride in, and those of us here today honour them in their ability to contribute and participate as we have in the past. We must all of us remember together that women who perform so much in our society out of their talents and their natural ability to contribute to our well being will continue to do so in the future and will continue to take pride in their ability to do so.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The day is important because it marks the acceptance, at least on paper, of a new global direction, a direction that will eventually tear down the walls of inequality and allow each one of us to live and work without the unfair burden of gender discrimination.

But let us make no mistake. The minister's statement has highlighted an important point, namely, that we still have a long way, a very long way to go in addressing major issues in our society here in Canada which affect women.

The force of the United Nations Convention is only as strong as each independent signatory wishes it to be. As in the case of the United Nations Charter of Rights and Freedoms, some signatories continue to be the greatest violators of human rights.

Can we stand and proclaim that we here in Canada are seriously addressing the problem of inequality and that we can be proud of our record on women's rights? I do not think so. The minister cited the work of this

government listing the first embodiment of the principles of the UN Convention in Section 15 of our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But while the *non obstante* clause exists and Section 15 is in jeopardy, I do not think that we can congratulate ourselves. What message is this government sending to the women of Canada when we have professed to entrench equality in a document where equality is essentially not entrenched?

The minister further pointed to the employment equity legislation that exists. This is remarkable considering that the government is still embroiled in a dispute with hospital service workers, predominantly women, who are being paid substantially less than their male colleagues. Even with a ruling against the government from the Human Rights Commission, this government has refused to move toward pay equity.

A recently released study has shown that women employed in Canadian banks make only 56 cents for every dollar paid to male employees and, further, although women outnumber male bank workers 70 to one, there are virtually no women in banks' upper management in Canada.

This government recently introduced legislation on abortion which criminalizes women for exercising control over their own reproduction. This government professes to be committed to the cause of women but with a sweep of its mighty arm, it slashed funding by 15 per cent from vital national women's programs. It is one thing to say that we are leaders in the realm of equality and it is another thing altogether to actually lead.

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Where is real pay equity and where, oh where, is a national child care program that is acknowledged by all to be the only true bridge to true employment equity?

The road to eliminating discrimination is a long one. I applaud the intentions of the United Nations and of Canadian governments past and present, but indeed let us not forget that there is much work still to be done.

The examples that I have listed illustrate that we are a long way from achieving a truly equal society. More distressing, the events two weeks ago at the University of Montreal reinforce the notion that women are still