

With respect to the latter, maternity benefits have been called into question by the discussion paper. The legislation that permits pregnant women maternity leave benefits is not discriminatory but, rather, provides distinct treatment on the basis that it is conducive to the welfare of our society as a whole, recognizes women's attachment to the labour force and makes a place for them. It is also in keeping with our signature on international covenants. Yet the Hon. Minister of Justice has chosen not to make a decision in time for the coming into force of the equality section. He has let the issue sit on the discussion paper.

Dealing as I do with a variety of portfolios, I am aware of the complexities of some of the decisions we must make when squaring the equality provisions of the Charter with our existing and future federal legislation. As I stated a few moments ago, I cannot fault the Government for reflecting carefully on the implications of the Charter, but I absolutely deplore, first, the Minister's cynicism and, second, the Government's seeming inability to make a number of straightforward decisions about straightforward laws, whether they deal with unemployment insurance benefits for pregnant women, family allowance cheques, mandatory retirement, needs of the handicapped or equality needs of the visible minorities.

Rather than proceeding with an abundance of caution, the Government has demonstrated an abundance of paralysis. It has cast the bulk of equality issues into the public arena when it should instead act as the Liberal Government was prepared to act. Perhaps it is time to see a little more courage coming from the other side of the House, a little less rhetoric and a little more keeping of the promises that were in the hearts and minds of the men and women who elected the Government with such a great majority. It should begin to live up to the things it promised the country.

**Mr. Corbett:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has gone to great lengths to criticize the Government for its handling of this issue. A criticism was levelled at the inaction and inappropriate direction that has been taken. The Hon. Member reminds me somewhat of the justice critic of her Party whom I understand she may possibly have replaced as a member on the subcommittee.

In his comments, the justice critic of the Official Opposition has been even more harshly critical of the Government's handling of the entire affair and indeed has even made the comment in committee that the interest groups to which the Hon. Member has referred should boycott the hearings. Of course, the opinions he expresses in committee and beyond committee are substantially felt and we have heard them in the House. Does the Hon. Member support the justice critic of the Official Opposition in his position that interest groups should indeed boycott the hearings of the subcommittee?

**Mrs. Finestone:** Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that the Hon. Member did not bother to listen to what I said. If he had, he would have been somewhat clearer in his ability to question our direction.

#### Statute Law Amendment Act

First, I would like to advise the Hon. Member and the Minister of Justice, who did not seem to know it that I am very pleased to be sitting on the subcommittee. I am even more pleased because the Government did not take into its hands the decisions that it should have taken. It left some of the thorny issues which I had said needed to be addressed by the subcommittee for the subcommittee to consider, and it is for that reason that I am pleased to be sitting on that subcommittee. However, it left a great many other questions to that subcommittee which it did not need to leave.

There were reams and reams of real documentary evidence presented in the documents *Equality Now!* and *Obstacles* as well as evidence obtained through hearings that had been taking place from 1980 to 1981 on which the Government could easily have acted and shown the courage of leadership. That was the issue addressed by our critic. That is why I believe the Hon. Member for York Centre was perfectly right. I have not seen the document to which the Hon. Member refers but I believe the intent behind the Hon. Member's action was that those groups that have spent much time, money and effort to enunciate their plans are asking what the point of returning is because the Government did not listen to them in the first place.

The reason other groups should come, and I would encourage them to come, is that there are other thorny issues that have social, economic and political consequences which go beyond the limits of discrimination as we understand it and which have very serious social impacts. Those are the things at which we should look and those are the things I think we will address with a great deal of care at the same time as we will insist on looking through the documents that were already tabled, so that in committee we may make some of the hard decisions the brave Minister of Justice was not prepared to make regarding his over-all responsibility.

**Mr. Stackhouse:** Mr. Speaker, I have not yet had the privilege of meeting the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone) but I have had the great pleasure of listening to her on a number of occasions. Then as now, I have listened with interest and benefit. I have always admired the graceful way in which she addresses the House. It sets an example that I wish some of her fellow members of the Opposition might emulate.

I would like to focus attention for few moments on one theme that ran throughout the Hon. Member's remarks. Indeed, this theme began almost at the beginning of her speech. She was referring to the Constitution and her own Party's share in bringing that Constitution and the Charter into existence as the basis of government in this country. I quite agree that her Party and its then Leader deserve great credit. They certainly took what could be called the lion's share in initiating that great development. But we must recognize that the Constitution belongs to all of us. Both sides of the House of Commons participated in the leadership which made the Constitution possible and all of the provinces engaged actively in the process. The courts were involved. Ultimately, the Constitution became the achievement of all Canadians. It