

I am sure we all find that this subject, the status of women, consists of legal muddles, economic injustices, social inequalities and blind prejudice. The more romantic differences between the sexes should be readily apparent and I profoundly hope that such will always be the case. I am sure that most honourable senators share this view.

Regrettably, in speaking on the matter under debate I must address myself to an altogether different world, to a difference existing between the sexes, a difference which has little reference to the charm and warmth of womanhood. The differences to which I refer are those relating to the sad fact that in respect of the sexes this country, and indeed much of the world, continues to be governed by a double standard. It is a standard of conduct, behaviour, opportunity, and responsibility which has been imposed by my sex and which until now has been accepted by the other.

I believe that the signs of the times are clear and that this situation is no longer tolerable. We have gone beyond that point, the debater's point, that women's rights cannot be won without the assumption of greater responsibilities by women. Privilege and responsibility are but two sides of the same coin. Today women seek full and equal participation in the daily round of our society. They seek rights and privileges commensurate with the great responsibilities which so many of them bear so unfairly.

Those of us—and this applies to most of us—who have concerned ourselves with the need for general legal reform in this country have been struck by the particular need for revision of our statutes as they relate to the rights of women. The report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, appointed by the Pearson Government, has made numerous recommendations, the purpose of which is to do away with many of the legal restraints which our society has imposed upon women with varying degrees of injustice since time immemorial. They are restraints to which my sex is not subjected.

The royal commission's report has carefully stressed the need to ensure that in carrying out such reforms, especially as they affect the family, care must be taken to see that existing law respecting the responsibilities of the male does not become onerous. The woman must not be given the advantage of new privileges without distributing more evenly responsibilities which ought to be shared between male and female as persons and not as representatives of different and unequal sexes. Personally, I would like to see the gist of these reforms carried through as quickly as possible. I am not happy with the strident and unfeminine tones of Women's Liberation. I believe that the necessity for the removal of discriminatory legislation directed against women from our statute books is self-evident.

A few weeks ago, on the eve—as it turned out—of his own wedding, the Prime Minister of Canada reminded us that in 1928 the Supreme Court of Canada decided that the term "persons" as set forth in the British North America Act with respect to this chamber could not be interpreted to embrace women as well as men.

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This, I regret to say, was indeed something about which to be strident. The situation to which the Prime Minister referred has, happily, changed because of a decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and we have had 11 women, commencing with Cairine Reay Wilson in 1930 and most recently Mrs. Casgrain and Mrs. Heath, responded to a summons to sit in this chamber. We now have five able women senators here. There are, however, numerous other areas of life in our country where the sort of situation that existed in this place over 40 years ago still pertains. Indeed, we might note that in the other place there is today only one woman member of Parliament. There are some of us who recall very vividly the first woman elected to Parliament, Miss Agnes MacPhail, who entered Parliament in 1921 and adorned the other place with her charm and great ability.

There is extensive discrimination against women in such fundamentals as career opportunities, financial rewards, education and broad social responsibility. In addition, women are still expected to tolerate social discrimination in their personal lives.

There is much to be strident about. But we ought also to understand that piecemeal reform is not going to solve the problem or to preserve the tranquillity and civilization provided by the charm and grace of a woman's femininity.

It is not easy to change attitudes that are the result of centuries of practice, however unfair that practice may appear to many of us today. Nonetheless, if we do not accelerate the pace at which we are prepared to carry through our reforms we may expect to see a lot less charm and to endure a protest arising from an awakened sensitivity and a righteous indignation.

Permit me, honourable senators, to illustrate my point by taking one area, that of education. It is only within the life span of some of us in this chamber that women were first permitted to breach the outer defences of the ivory tower and gain the right to receive an undergraduate education in our universities. Today that right is commonplace. I note, however, that it is only relatively recently that women have been permitted to embark in any appreciable numbers on postgraduate programs. One ought to ask why. The answer, in some part, lies in the fact that numerous civilized and cultivated university professors have been reluctant to devote time and energy to encouraging the development of even their most brilliant female students, on the grounds that all too frequently the acquisition of professional training will be wasted. The girl will go off and get married and never exercise her skills and talents in the manner intended.

I well remember a distinguished professor at one of the universities, which I was privileged to attend for the purpose of postgraduate work, who rebelled at the presence of women in his classes and indeed their attendance at the university. Finding women present in the lecture room he invariably commenced his lecture by simply saying "gentlemen".

All too frequently in the past such attitudes have been defensible on the simple basis of looking at the record. We, however, ought to look further and realize that