

*Supply*

called upon to promote the department's policies. The role of the advisory council was precisely to criticize government inertia and to suggest possible solutions regarding the various policies of the government concerning the status of women.

Take day care facilities, for example. We know that the 3 per cent of GDP has been reached and that 50,000 day care spaces have been promised. This does not come from the government. We hear about pay equity, while women are still earning 72 per cent of what men earn, and there are other decisions that the government is dragging its feet on. I think that enough has been said today about the various possible solutions that the government could adopt to bring about a considerable improvement in the economic situation of women.

What concerns me is the lack of transparency that might result from this new direction. I am also concerned about the choice we would have to make.

The minister said yesterday in her speech on the budget in the House that the various women's groups were very strong, very effective. I think that some of them are but that others are not so strong and do not have the Canadian Advisory Council's analysis capacity. Without this analysis capacity, how will they manage?

Women living in the outlying regions will have to negotiate with the federal government, to travel, to defend their priorities. The minister may be very positive, but I do not know what the outcome will be in the long term. I do not think, however, that this way of looking at things will be an end in itself.

She seemed to be saying that the women's movement was born of various concerns and that it was in its infancy when the council was created. I would say that, on the contrary, we have not yet reached maturity.

In 1920, women were earning 50 per cent less than men; in 1995, women are making only 72 per cent of what men make. We have clearly lost ground.

• (1600)

Given the economic situation, we know full well that women will be the hardest hit. This afternoon in the House, the Deputy Prime Minister replied to a question I asked on the dismantling of the advisory council—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. The secretary of state, for a brief reply.

**Mrs. Finestone:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. I am aware of her keen interest for women's issues. I know she speaks from the heart and I respect her for that. While I understand her interest for women's issues, I wish she would reply when Reform members make statements in this House, because it is quite frustrating to hear them sometimes.

I must say that, indeed, the advisory council had a role to play, and it played it well. Perhaps it even took a mother-hen approach at times. As I see it, the council was the driving force behind many activities and initiatives. You cannot say that, over the years, the Fédération des femmes du Québec, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women—the similarity of certain names causes some confusion, I know—the National Council of Women and others—there are a dozen organizations out there that I could name, have not been able to make representations and have not done so. And, through independent research, we will make sure that they can decide for themselves what their priorities will be regarding all the women's groups; I will not interfere. I think it will be in their best interest.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the motion tabled by the hon. member for Québec, which deals with the economic equality of women. In spite of all the attention generated by the status of women in Canada, and by a number of legislative measures and policies designed to correct the inequalities of which they are victims, the situation of women remains very different from that of men, and there is still a lot to be done before they can enjoy the same benefits as their male counterparts.

As the member for Drummond, I first want to express my friendship and my support to women in my riding, particularly those who work in organizations dedicated to improving the situation of women in our riding. As the opposition critic on health issues, this is also an opportunity to stress the urgency of establishing a health care system for women.

The moneys allocated to research on women's health issues remain largely inadequate. There are insufficiencies in various sectors such as breast cancer research, gynaecology and obstetrics, chronic and degenerative diseases, mental health, violence, occupational diseases, specific needs of immigrant women of ethnic origin and native women, teenagers, elderly women, and so on.

At the beginning of her mandate, 15 months ago, the Minister of Health told us how she was going to promote women's health. She explained the programs that her government was going to implement, so as to correct the inequalities which affect women in the health care system. The reality, however, is completely different.

Since the Liberals took office, the funds allocated to health care keep diminishing. This government maintained the freeze on transfer payments to the provinces, thus creating a shortfall for provincial health care systems, including Quebec's. The government goes even farther in its last budget by cutting \$70 million in the health department's budget, which is a 3.8 per cent reduction. But nothing is done to correct the imbalance between men and women.