

Supply

standing committee of the House which would be responsible for reviewing and working toward an improved status for women in Canada. This committee is essential because there is no other group that will take on that ombudsman role. These issues are not being dealt with in other Government Departments. We need a committee to study women's issues similar to the committee responsible for Indian Affairs.

I would urge the Minister to take action and tell us where she stands on this issue because she has not committed herself. I suspect that this is why the Government is dragging its feet. There are many positive steps that can be taken.

In conclusion, I suggest that the most positive step is what women are doing for themselves and what they will continue to do. Women power is a great force in this country, and it is becoming stronger. Women have tremendous talents for organizing and working for change and lobbying the Government. I believe this is the way to solutions and they should continue to do this in order to make us all accountable and make these issues a major condition for their votes in the next election.

Mr. Peterson: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most important issues that this House has dealt with. Again, I can only lament the fact that because this motion was brought forward by the Opposition, there would have been so few Members present from the Opposition.

I wish to point out that our Minister responsible for the status of women has made some very important commitments to improving the lot of women. Her leadership has been very important in giving it fire and direction. It is devoid of empty rhetoric. I think that all of us who are here were touched by the very concrete measures that were announced and elaborated upon today by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) which attempt to give women in the workplace enhanced opportunities and more prevalent positions in order to participate in the mainstream of Canadian jobs, as intimated by the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Mrs. Mitchell). These measures are critical to accomplish those goals.

The Hon. Member for Vancouver East cited a litany of issues. She described many issues with which we are all concerned. However, she failed to give credit where credit is due. I will use just one example, and it is one with which she is very concerned. It is the question of wife battering. Is she aware that the recommendations calling for increased funding for shelters were acted upon in our June, 1982 budget through giving CMHC increased power to create shelters? Is she aware of the increased awareness program that has been instituted with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police? Sensitizing programs and training has been undertaken in that area. Is she aware that, as a result of the requested research on the battering phenomenon, the family violence clearing house was established by the Department of Health and Welfare and is currently gathering information? Is she aware of the fact that one of the other recommendations, an information program,

has been undertaken by the Department of Health and Welfare? Family Allowance cheques have contained pamphlets dealing with wife battering. Is she aware of the fact that the problems dealing with jurisdiction are now being dealt with? Commitments have been undertaken by the Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan) and the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Does the Hon. Member intend to allow the Hon. Member for Vancouver East to reply?

Mr. Peterson: Yes, I would be delighted to give her the opportunity to reply. These are just some of the questions I have for her.

I would also ask her why she did not mention the significant progress we have made in changing the rape laws to sexual assault. It was the most important change in the Criminal Code in 50 years, to give women the opportunity to come forward when they have been subjected to violent assault. I would ask her why her Party, when she brought up the question of pornography, did nothing about our efforts to deal with child pornography and abuse of young people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order.

Mrs. Mitchell: I thought I would not get a chance to respond. With respect to the Hon. Member's first point about the number of Members in the House today, I would suggest that if we had a committee responsible for the status of women we could be talking about these issues every day. Not only could we be talking about them but also acting on them in a non-partisan and collaborative fashion. I think we should hear why the Government has refused to act on that proposal.

I have been holding a watching brief on the report on battered wives and have visited many transition houses and talked to many groups across the country.

• (1800)

I commend the Government, and all of us really, because I think that that report was a very good example of how we can work together in the interests of women in Canada. The CMHC provision, I might point out to the Hon. Member in case he is not aware of it, because that is one of the ones that I pressed for very hard in committee, covers second stage housing, I believe. There still is a great need for funding for transition houses.

In regard to the RCMP, that is a good move too. My understanding is that it is mostly the younger recruits who are getting that training, but it is a start, I agree. I wish we had as much action from the Government on the whole question which my colleague, the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald), has raised of changing the Broadcasting Act. That is another piece of legislation where changes are needed.

Certainly there has been some progress made in the areas he mentioned, but I refer back to the 12 points I raised where an awful lot more action could be taken.

An. Hon. Member: It is six o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): It is six o'clock.