

equally and meet all the qualifications and physical requirements. This is exactly what the Government is doing as I indicated earlier.

I would like to comment now on a fallacy which is argued by some people. It is that all future wars will be push button wars. The experience of the war in the Falklands should teach us some facts. I think that that war clearly indicated that physical fitness and strength was perhaps even more vital than in the past. In the Napoleonic wars, in the early 1800s, Wellington's troops carried packs weighing around 80 pounds. In the Falklands war the British soldier carried a 120-pound pack from San Carlos to Port Stanley. Strength and endurance was as important then, if not more so, than in the past. In that war the world witnessed the terribly destructive force of a small missile when it hit a ship. Once those missiles fired by push buttons hit a ship, physical strength and stamina were as vital as ever to keep the ship afloat and save lives. In that respect we have to pay attention to both common sense and the facts.

Why do the Armed Forces exist in the first place? Whatever the goal of the Armed Forces is, everything that serves to accomplish the goal must be funnelled in that direction. Wherever men and women can serve that goal, fine. Where a lack of physical strength and stamina impede achieving the goal, then that should be the limitation. Where facts tell us otherwise, we have to maintain some measure of objectivity and not allow our feelings or the desire for rights to obliterate common sense completely. We have to let facts teach us. The war in the Falklands clearly suggests that we have to keep physical strength and stamina uppermost in our mind.

Mr. Robinson: Women have that.

Mr. Reimer: I am also reminded of the Israeli experience. At one time they had to employ anyone they could, both men and women, to assist in their fight. Yet they also learned that when they placed men and women together in infantry units, the men would sometimes ignore the mission and attempt to protect the females beside them. The woman in charge of women in the Israeli Armed Forces commented that they had forgotten 5,000 years of experience and simple facts of human nature. I hope we will not forget those facts or the 5,000 years of experience. Therefore, yes, let us open up all of the trades and occupations in our Armed Forces to women so long as it is consistent with common sense, with the facts, and with the Armed Forces requirement to be operationally effective in the interests of national security.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to the motion of the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should implement the recommendations of the sub-committee on equality rights of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs:

(1) That all trades and occupations in the Canadian Armed Forces be open to women.

(2) That Canadian Armed Forces practices relating to the employment and promotion of women be monitored by the Canadian Human Rights

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Commission and that progress in revising policies in the manner we recommend be evaluated by the Commission at regular intervals.

It was my privilege to serve on the equality rights task force along with six other members of this House. Of the many issues we addressed, the primary one was of blatant discrimination based on sex. As we all well know, that is illegal under Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The law says that people shall be treated equally. It is true that that is qualified for a justifiable reason. There must be an intelligent approach to decision-making, but it cannot be based on sex. It must be based on sound, reasoned arguments.

Before I go further on the question of women in the Armed Forces I must respond to the Hon. Member for Burnaby. I am sure he will agree that women pointed out time and time again during the committee hearings that their interest was in peace. They were against nuclear proliferation. They looked to this world for peace and security for all men and women. The view of most men and women in Canada is that we do not want to have to face the ongoing concern over conflicts around the world. We would like a peaceful world for our children and their children, where respect for differences is such that they are accommodated in a peaceful way, not with armed confrontation. However, it would be unreal for me to say that that is the picture of the world as it exists today. Therefore, as a sovereign nation we have an obligation and a responsibility to protect ourselves with properly equipped Armed Forces. We must participate in world peace-keeping forces and meet our moral and legal commitments to our allies around the world. In doing so we have to look at the world as it is and learn the lessons of history.

What have women been saying about their responsibilities as full partners in this society? The issue of women in combat roles was addressed in 1970 by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. That commission recommended that all trades in the Armed Forces be open to women. After reviewing the recommendation, the forces set out to expand the role of women. The limit involved in a fixed numerical list was removed but employment restrictions were maintained for primary combat roles, remote locations and seagoing service. I know that many of my colleagues across the floor feel that those restrictions should be maintained, but that is not the wish of the women with whom we met. In 1979, the military colleges were open to women. In addition a series of trials were initiated to assess the effect that employment would have on service women in near combat or isolated units putting women into an operational capability. The results of those trials are still not in, but to date the Swinter trials indicate that women met all those obligations in a fine and upstanding manner.

• (1740)

I would like to know how many men would have done so in such difficult circumstances where there were so few women in these large masses and they were being examined through a microscope. I think any one of us would have been very disconcerted and uncomfortable if put in such a situation.