

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 22, 1975

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

APPOINTMENT OF TABLE OFFICERS

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I inform the House of the appointment of Messrs. Réginald Boivin and Maxime Guitard to the position of third clerk assistant.

[Translation]

All hon. members are aware that Messrs. Boivin and Guitard have always carried out their duties most satisfactorily during the many years they have served with the House of Commons.

[English]

I am sure that to all hon. members the knowledge of these appointments will be of interest and satisfaction knowing, as hon. members do, the many years of faithful and devoted service that both of these distinguished gentlemen have given to the House of Commons. It is a great pleasure for me to be able to announce these appointments to the House at this time.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as this session of parliament reconvenes, we are entering not only a new year—and I hope it will be a happy one for all hon. members—but a unique and special period, International Women's Year.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: International Women's Year, 1975, was proclaimed by the United Nations. It is a year which has three goals: peace, development and equality. Canada, as a member nation, has undertaken a substantial program of support for this special year, through legislation, through funding of groups and organizations, through the promotion of equality within federal government departments and agencies, and through the promotion of a national awareness of the current status of women.

[Translation]

One of the most evident means the government has at its disposal to improve the status of women is through legislation. Parliament is considering at this time an

omnibus bill on the status of women which aims at amending eight federal statutes. Thanks to this bill, the government will be able to eliminate sections which, in various statutes, discriminate against women. Other legislative amendments are also being considered: one of them will bring about the establishment of a federal commission of human rights.

We are very happy to have nine women sit with us in the House, an unprecedented number. Because of their sex, we are inclined to look upon these hon. members as official spokesmen on every topic related to the status of women, which is quite understandable. Yet, there are 264 hon. members altogether in Parliament, and each and every one of these men and women should lend an ear to the demands of women: do they not make up half of the electorate? The status of women is a national problem which must be of interest to all Canadian men and women.

● (1410)

[English]

Discrimination against women is in some ways comparable to discrimination against society's other disadvantaged groups. It is not always overt. In fact, as both provincial and federal governments work to introduce legislation that provides equal rights in many areas, the acts of discrimination themselves often become more subtle and insidious. The crucial and necessary changes are frequently required in areas where no legislation can ever be introduced—in attitudes. Yet it is attitudes that often militate against equal treatment for women and men.

During International Women's Year it is hoped that all the people of Canada will work toward making equality a reality by truly recognizing women and men as equals. Real freedom of opportunity for women will come when society recognizes that women have the same right to pursue whatever goals they may individually choose, be that goal centred on home and family or career or a combination of any such goals. This equality of opportunity can only come about when all Canadians recognize women as full and equal contributors to our society.

International Women's Year is a year in which we can acknowledge the major contributions which women have made to Canada's social, cultural, political and economic development. It is also a time to ensure that as women choose new roles, the doorways are opened so that they may continue to make such contributions.

It would, however, be unrealistic to assume that full equality will be achieved in just one year. It is for this reason that International Women's Year, while being a special year, must not be regarded as an end in itself but must be seen in the context of the government's ongoing program to improve the status of women. This work must