

Supply

If you wanted to, you could find the women's country. There are lots of places to go looking. Find a hostel. Bag ladies can draw routes to the women's country. Every homeless woman once lived in a house on a street next to you too.

Go to the psychiatric wards. Mad women know the routes to the women's country too. Every mad woman once lived in a house on a street next to you.

• (1150)

I realize that my time has expired, but I want to conclude by saying that I believe one of the most difficult issues we have in communicating the problems women are having in this country today, especially violence against women, is that too often we just do not want to talk about it openly. If we did start talking about it openly a little more often, I believe we might institute the kinds of policies that would prevent a lot of this from happening.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand in support of the motion of my colleague from Halifax:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to protect and promote the fundamental rights of Canadian women, especially as reflected in the 1992 budget.

In this year's annual report of the Human Rights Commission, three aspects of discrimination against women are highlighted: the sex biases in the justice system, the systemic economic disadvantages, and various forms of violence.

The 1992-93 budget has done nothing to promote security of person for women. However, it does include measures that will actually facilitate sex biases in the justice system. Worse still, this budget promotes and even authorizes systemic economic discrimination against women.

In the introduction of his budget speech the finance minister claims that one of his aims is to support the well-being of Canadians and their families. Instead he has made women and children the primary targets of his cuts and fiscal mismanagement.

The child benefit is one aspect of this budget that has been widely promoted by this government. Perhaps mother's disadvantage would be a better term. The average family gains very little from this proposal. Since it is not fully indexed to inflation, in three years the value of the benefit will decrease by 10 per cent, and within 10

years this benefit will deprive most families of all meaningful assistance.

Single mothers on social assistance fare even more badly. They receive no additional benefit whatsoever. Already over 60 per cent of single mothers live in poverty in this country. Last year 700,000 Canadian children stood in line at food banks. Without increased benefits to their mothers these children will stay in that food bank line.

At the same time child care has been completely neglected. This is from a government that has been promising better child care and actively campaigning on that promise for over eight years. Without child care single mothers cannot find employment that will help them escape the social welfare trap.

By denying single mothers these two fundamental forms of assistance, this government has chosen to perpetuate the cycle of child poverty.

But food on the table is only one necessity that this government is attacking. By severely curtailing the CMHC's social housing budget, and by shutting down the Co-Operative Housing Program altogether, the government will deprive many single mothers and their children of a roof over their heads. Over one million Canadians could be left homeless by this mercenary measure.

Working women will also suffer under this budget, especially if they are employees of the federal government. Equal pay for work of equal value is still a dream for most women. Over the past 20 years the male-female wage gap has closed by only 8 cents. Women's wages, on average, are still 32 cents lower than men's for comparable work.

Our toothless pay equity legislation puts the onus on the employee to prove that discrimination exists. The Pay Research Bureau, which collects and provides information to help set pay, benefits and conditions of employment for the Public Service, was one of the few resources for women trying to establish evidence of discrimination. The government has used the budget to eliminate that essential resource.

Retroactive pay equity settlements prior to 1990 have also been eliminated, even though women have been entitled to equal pay since 1977. This move will deny 80,000 public servants earnings which are rightfully theirs. I call that almost stealing.