

THE SENATE

Friday, August 10, 1956

The Senate met at 11 a.m., Hon. Thomas Vien, P.C., Acting Speaker, in the Chair.

Prayers.

Routine proceedings.

INCOME TAX BILL

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

Hon. A. K. Hugessen, for Hon. Mr. Euler, Acting Chairman of the Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce, presented the committee's report on Bill 418.

The report was read by the Clerk Assistant as follows:

The Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce, to whom was referred the Bill (418) intitled: "An Act to amend the Income Tax Act", have in obedience to the order of reference of August 8, 1956, examined the said bill, and now report the same with the following amendment:

Page 1, lines 6 and 7: strike out the words "of any kind whatsoever".

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: Later this day.

FEMALE EMPLOYEES EQUAL PAY BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Muriel McQ. Fergusson moved the second reading of Bill 445, an Act to promote equal pay for female employees.

She said: Honourable senators, today, when I have the privilege of introducing and explaining this bill to promote equal pay for female employees, is a highlight in my life.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mrs. Fergusson: The principle on which this bill is based is the recognition of the dignity and the worth of women's work. Through women's organizations with which I am associated I have worked for many years for this recognition on both a national and a provincial level.

Canada is a member of the United Nations Organization and, as such, she has subscribed to the belief that there should be equal opportunity for men and women. The United Nations has repeatedly emphasized the importance of equal pay as an international standard. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, stated that everyone without discrimination has the right to equal pay for

equal work. This means that all Governments which are members of the United Nations have given at least lip service to the principle of equal pay.

The constitution of the International Labour Organization, as originally adopted in 1919, proclaimed "the special and urgent importance" of "the principle that men and women should receive equal remuneration for work of equal value". The principle was repeated in the amended I.L.O. Constitution in 1948.

In 1951 the International Labour Organization adopted a convention concerning equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value. Since that time 14 countries have ratified the convention. When the convention was adopted, in 1951, the Canadian Government delegates favoured adoption of an instrument but took the position that a recommendation was preferable to a convention. According to the statement made by the spokesman for the Canadian Government, this was because of the difficulties which Canada as a federal state would encounter in seeking to ratify a convention on a subject for which jurisdiction is divided between Parliament and the provinces, and also because at that time there was a strong feeling in Canada that equal pay was a matter for collective bargaining rather than legislation.

Honourable senators will know, without my telling them, that many of the businesses and industries in which Canadian women are employed are under the jurisdiction of the provincial Governments, according to the British North America Act. However, since 1951 five of our provinces have passed equal pay legislation, and now we are considering a federal bill. Canada has therefore gone a long way toward carrying out the principles of the convention during the past five years.

In many other countries people have awakened to the injustice of paying women less than men for the same kind, quality and quantity of work. As I mentioned before, 14 countries, some highly industrialized, and some not, have ratified the Equal Pay Convention of the I.L.O., and in many countries which have not yet ratified it, women, often with the assistance and support of their men co-workers, are making considerable progress toward adopting the principle of equal pay for equal work.

Equal pay bills have been introduced into the United States Congress at every session since 1945, although it is true that they have not yet been passed by Congress; however, 16 states of the Union and the Territory of Alaska have adopted this legislation and passed bills to implement it.