

*Statements by Ministers*

An award also went to Grace Harman, who has worked for women in the labour movement, not a traditional area for women to be active in! Mrs. Hartman has been President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Emma Pelletier-Caron, who also received an award, has been involved in many community actions in Acadia and collaborated on a collection of biographical sketches of 100 exceptional Acadian women.

Finally, Pearl Steen took up the cause of pushing for legislative change to improve the status of women. Mrs. Steen has been President of the Council of Women, among other duties.

Mr. Speaker, I find it significant that a decision was made to give the Persons Award to five women instead of just one. We must remember that in the twenties, five women protested the fact that they were not persons before the law. As was said earlier by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mr. McLean), that meant they could not become lawyers or judges or sit in the Senate.

Today, 50 years later, we should not only take a lesson from the courage and perseverance of Emily Murphy and her four companions, but we should also realize the importance of joint action in the struggle for women's rights.

The women of the Eighties have understood this very well. The women's movement has made great progress in 15 years, and although today's movement is not as noisy as the movement of the Sixties and Seventies, the fact remains that it is very effective. The progress made by the movement is irreversible, and those who see it only as a passing fad should think again.

Today I would like to point out some of the causes being championed by the women's movement. Despite the good faith expressed a few minutes ago by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I believe the Conservative Government should not be too quick to brag about being on the side of women. The employment equity legislation introduced by the government does not satisfy Canadian women at all. As a matter of fact, it does not satisfy either the handicapped, the natives and the visible minorities, the other three target groups which it was meant to help.

Bill C-62 does not provide for any employment equity program which would be compulsory, although all similar programs on a voluntary basis have proven ineffective time and again. Only compulsory programs are likely to succeed, something of which Canadians women are wearing themselves out trying to convince a Government which will not listen.

Canadian women are also waiting anxiously for the Katie Cooke Task Force's report on day care centers. I am aware that the Prime Minister promised quite recently to set up another task force to study the day care center situation. But why reinvent the wheel? Why not use instead Mrs. Cooke's report, her findings, the many briefs which were submitted to

her as well as the many research papers on which the report was based.

As for prostitution, all the Government could introduce was tiny Bill C-49, dealing with soliciting, when what women really needed was a complete reform. I am not the only one to say so, Mr. Speaker, for the Fraser Commission has concluded likewise.

On September 25, the Conservative Government announced a new and expanded litigant assistance program to help people who want to institute proceedings under Sections 15, 28 and 29 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. But instead of distributing the funds among the various organizations representing Canadian women, the native, the handicapped and the visible minorities, it gave all the money to the Canadian Council on Social Development.

Mr. Speaker, I have nothing against the Canadian Social Development Council, but we have to be realistic. Funds are allocated on a case by case basis and the same battles will be fought twice, which will mean a waste of money and energies, and this is not what women wanted. If the Conservative Government had put aside part of this amount for the women's legal action and education fund, some kind of action plan could have been developed for women, but perhaps the Government is somewhat afraid of organized women's movements.

Today, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women has lauded the organized action of women 50 years ago, but it is different when comes the time to recognize in practice the organized action of women today and provide assistance for the battles they are fighting now.

I would like to speak about the fight of Canadian women against the deindexing of family allowances, Mr. Speaker. The Government is attacking family allowances and we have to realize that this is the only check received by a great many Canadian women, namely all those who stay at home to take care of their children. Is this the message of the Conservative Government to Canadian families, that it wants to make the task of raising children even more difficult than it is?

I hope that the Conservative Government will realize in time the mistake it is making by cancelling the full indexation of family allowances in the years to come.

In closing, I would like to point out that today's women have different objectives than those of their sisters of the twenties, but that their battles are just as urgent.

Women in the eighties must effect a major restructuring of the labour market and the family. This must be done on a collective, not an individual basis.

The real battles to be fought are those which will guarantee the economic survival of women and which concern daycare services, part-time work and parental leave.