

Housewives' Allowance

When hon. members relate that to the figures of those women who are employed at the very senior levels of administration in the public service, they will realize what women in public service employment are up against.

According to a listing of departments from the Public Service Commission 1976 annual report, there were only 38 females in the senior executive capacity, known as SX, compared to 1,221 males. National Revenue with a total of 23,736 employees, of which 39.4 per cent were women. There were 55 employees in the SX category, but not a single woman. The Department of Supply and Services had 10,217 employees, 46.8 per cent of whom were women. Of 62 in the SX category, there was not a single woman.

In the Public Service Commission, which is charged with the redressing of the balance in terms of employment of women at senior levels, there were 4,042 employees; 55 per cent were women, there were 27 in the SX category, of which only one was a woman. Obviously she must have been regarded as a token woman in the SX category.

In the Department of Secretary of State where almost two thirds of the employees are women, there was not one in the SX category. CIDA, which deals with the development of countries around the world, with a thousand employees, roughly half of them women, with 31 people at the SX level, does not have one single woman at that level. That is the kind of situation women face today in the public service.

What concerns me about the motion today is that we might restrict the opportunity for women to have their rightful role at every level of employment, not just in certain ghettos outside the home as is presently the case at a clerical administrative level, but throughout the public service and employment in this country.

I will not carry on this debate any longer, Mr. Speaker. It has been a useful contribution to a particularly important question, and I hope other members will have an opportunity to contribute to it as well.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Robinson) and the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) have indicated, it is possible, on the one hand, to praise the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) for bringing in this motion and then to turn around and find all sorts of flaws in it. I suppose I could find a flaw in it myself. However, I am more concerned, to give my support to the intent of the motion, which is a good one for us to be considering this afternoon.

Time is going on and I shall not be part of the talking out process. I have learned in private members' hour how to say what is on my mind very quickly.

I feel that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare missed one of the main points in this whole proposal. I recognize that in the motion there is a reference to the ensuring of a global income. However, it seems to me that the main reason for making payments of some sort to housewives and mothers is not just as an addition

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

to income, but as a means of recognizing the contribution these people make.

During the first part of his speech the parliamentary secretary showed no indication of that. When he got along into his speech, he talked about recognition. What did he say? Wives and mothers should enjoy the prestige that they have, that that should be sufficient recognition. That is where I threw in my reference about being members of parliament. There is a lot of prestige attached to our position as members of parliament, but we are not a group of people who are prepared to do it for no pay, just recognition. I submit that the time has come when we should recognize the work being done by housewives and mothers in the same way as we recognize all others.

I recognize the argument that the hon. member for Egmont made about job ghettos. However, I think he carried it a little bit far. I would like to see an equal chance for women whether they go out into the labour market or stay at home. As the hon. member pointed out, there are plenty of ghettos. However, I believe he is overplaying that word as far as life in the home is concerned. I contend that, there should be equal opportunity.

I promised myself to keep this contribution brief. However, I want to say a word about my concern with regard to equality for women which also extends to the time when they should be on pension. It is a shame we have not found some way of providing women in the home with the equivalent of the Canada Pension Plan. This might be one way of doing it. If we can put them on some sort of allowance or salary for the work they do in the home and count that as a contribution to the Canada Pension Plan, we might be able to do something about it. We shall have more to say about this matter on another occasion.

My main concern this afternoon is not to point out the flaws in the hon. member's motion but to commend him for bringing it forward and to encourage him to keep at it.

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to enter this debate this afternoon, but I cannot sit here and listen to this kind of tokenism, perpetuation of role locking a woman into the role of homemaker—a place in life she may not choose. If you want to pay your wife, pay her yourself; the country should not have to pay the cost. I do not think there are many women in Canada who would welcome this, as opposed to having essential help to what I would call the "displaced homemaker". These are women who have carried out this job as wife and mother for 10 or 15 years and raised their children with little imaginative support in the home. Their husbands were out enjoying themselves. I have worked all my life in that world and I know the men have had a much better and easier time of it. They have their coffee breaks and other privileges. They had freedoms, often, to act in a way I did not admire such as being disloyal to the women at home working.