

Oral Questions

The Department of Justice has made the protection of women from violence a major focus of its work. This includes reform of the Criminal Code. The law governing sexual violence was amended in 1983, and the department is assessing the impact of those changes.

In addition, we are analysing measures to deal specifically with violent pornography. We have funded research to other projects; for example, a television program to inform the general public about the existing law of sexual assault and an evaluation of programs for men who batter their spouses or lovers.

Also, in the area of policy development, the department has set up a departmental committee to develop policies relating to women, especially violence against women, and it participates in an interdepartmental committee developing policy on family violence.

With respect to the administration of justice, the department has provided support for conferences and seminars designed to sensitize justice professionals on sex equality issues, especially as they relate to violence against women.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her very comprehensive report on what her department is doing.

I think that action has to speak louder than words. I believe it is time that the Minister of Justice brought the attorneys general of the provinces together to amend the Criminal Code to protect women.

Will the minister take this action immediately?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, at the federal-provincial meeting of attorneys general in June at Niagara-on-the-Lake, a decision was made to form a federal-provincial task force on women and the law.

One of the first things I did was invite the provincial attorneys general to participate with me. I indicated that I would host a federal-provincial conference on women in the law which, I hope, will be held in the late spring of 1991, with an agenda formed by this federal-provincial task force. The thrust of that conference, I hope, will be threefold: women in the legal profession, women in the courts, and the substantive law as it relates to women. I think this will provide a very timely opportunity for us to

work on the federal-provincial level to address the very questions that she raises. I might add that they are excellent questions and I share her commitment to them.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Justice.

P.O.W.E.R., a Winnipeg based community group has been praised by the Commons justice committee as being a model project for helping women. Yet it was forced to close its doors several weeks ago because of a lack of public funds.

Will the minister commit herself today to helping this organization get started again?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am unaware of the issue which the hon. member raises. I would be very pleased to review it to see if it is appropriate for our department to be involved in it. I cannot give you an answer beyond that.

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer. I have a supplementary question for the same minister.

P.O.W.E.R. is helping women who are prostitutes who wish to get off the streets to do so. This was an issue raised and reviewed in the justice committee and one that concerns women in several cities.

I would like to ask the minister today if she will take the initiative to see that projects like this are sponsored across the country.

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the report of the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General which raises a similar issue is a very good one. It makes some very significant recommendations with respect to dealing with the root causes of the problem of violence against women on the streets.

I can only say that I have not had the opportunity to review it with enough depth to come forward with policy proposals. I respect those recommendations and I respect organizations that are involved in dealing with the