

*Adjournment Debate*

**Mr. Doug Frith (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, the women who stay in the home represent 60 per cent of the females of this country. Of the five million females in this country, roughly three million stay at home. The minister has pointed out in the House that the government is now studying ways to provide some form of pension coverage for these women who stay at home. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has pointed out that part of the problem which we face, as we learned while investigating other countries in which pension coverage for women in the home is contemplated, is that only those who can afford to pay the contributions will receive benefits at the age of retirement.

This leaves open the whole question of those who are in need but who cannot even afford to pay into the pension plan. The minister is more than aware of the fact that this is one of the major drawbacks which the government must address when it looks at pension reform. I believe the hon. member is aware of the national pension conference which is to be held in Ottawa on March 31, April 1 and 2. This conference will attempt to address many of the problems which face the female component of our population.

There must be a study on this whole question of providing pension coverage to women who stay at home. Some of the alternatives at which we are now looking are a system of mandatory CPP contributions for homemakers, a separate national contributory plan for spouses working in the home, improved survivors' benefits under the existing Canada Pension Plan to mention a few. I realize that there is very little time left to me, but other parts of the plan include, for example, increasing benefits for single persons under the Guaranteed Income Supplement program. These are parameters which must be studied and which the government is actively studying at the present time. One of the government's commitments is to alleviate the situation which largely affects our female population.

● (2210)

UNITED NATIONS—SPECIAL SESSION ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT—GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton South):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Frith) in the House at this great moment because he is one who understands the North-South issue as he, with the hon. member for Erie (Mr. Fretz) who is also present, and myself, is a member of the North-South task force that has spent a great deal of time on this issue which we are trying to profile in this House.

Tonight I want to ask the parliamentary secretary what he is doing to advance a one-day debate in this House on a government motion to discuss foreign affairs. The last time that this House had a debate on foreign affairs was December 19 and 20, 1977, more than three years ago. An awful lot has gone on in the world since then, particularly regarding the North-South issue. This year the economic summit will meet in Ottawa, as Canada is to be the host. As the Prime Minister

(Mr. Trudeau) said in the House yesterday following his trip, the North-South question will be foremost on the agenda. It is also likely that a summit of North-South leaders will meet in Mexico next June.

This, then, is the year to discuss North-South issues. But what is the Canadian government's policy on this? That is the fundamental question I am putting to the parliamentary secretary tonight. What is the government's policy? It is a reasonable question.

The North-South task force in which we participated made 38 recommendations and I should like to know which of them the government will take seriously. The Prime Minister has spoken in vague terms about increasing agricultural production and about a recycling process for OPEC funds, but I want to know the details. How can Members of Parliament respond on this issue which is of tremendous importance to the economic stability of our planet and Canada's participation in the North-South dialogue? How can we play our role as parliamentarians following on the committee work if we do not get a handle on what government policy is? I want the parliamentary secretary to address that question.

The Brandt report which has received international acclaim and which studied this issue has put out a full and exhaustive analysis of it. It focused sharply on what ought to be done to break the North-South dialogue so that we can make some progress toward closing the gap between rich and poor. It issued the following four point emergency provisions: first, a large scale transfer of resources to developing countries; second, an international energy strategy; third, a global food program; and fourth, a start on some major reforms to the international economic system. The North-South task force accepted those four emergency provisions and put them not only in the main report but also in the interim report so they have been on the table of this House since last summer. When I raised the question last May, I asked what the government was going to do about the four emergency grant proposals.

I put the question to the Prime Minister yesterday and I invite you, Mr. Speaker, to search *Hansard* assiduously, as I know you do every morning, and I know you will be unable to find an answer to the question because he did not answer. I ask the parliamentary secretary to address this question tonight.

There is no mystery about how to form a policy, Mr. Speaker. All we need are some basic principles; then we put the policies behind the principles. The six basic principles that ought to be the basis of a guideline for the formulation of a Canadian government policy in this crucial year of 1981 so that Canada can play its role in helping to break this North-South deadlock are the following.

The first principle is to put a floor under poverty. Under that principle would be policy implications about when Canada will reach the .7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance that is the international target advocated by the UN.

The second principle is international food security. We must do more to increase production, to increase food reserves and