

*Supply*

action programs in place in a number of Government Departments. In August, 1981 CEIC, Secretary of State and Treasury Board Secretariat agreed to participate in affirmative action projects for women. But where are my provincial counterparts? Any action there? Pensions for women? Yes, it is true that older women in this country live near or beneath the poverty line. Why? Well, it is very easy to say that a change in the pension system would increase their income. But we all know that while pensions are based on income we cannot realistically expect the situation will change. If women are to continue to earn lower wages, or for that matter provide unpaid services, they will continue to have low pensions. No amount of accessibility or portability will change that.

That Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs has produced an outstanding report on the issue of family violence which has generated interest across Canada and in all provincial Governments. It has exposed a social problem which has probably been around since time immemorial, but one which has never been aired before. I suggest that under the leadership of this Government many, many of these changes, such as Bills C-82, C-115, C-61 and C-127, have come to see the light of day.

In conclusion, if all this constitutes apathy, then the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands has provided us with a new and strange meaning of the term. I would like to say to the Member who suggested that we establish a standing committee on issues pertaining to women: to what end? So that once again we reduce these matters, these so-called women's issues which are not women's issues but societal issues, to a segregated ghetto status? These issues do not partake of any gender; they are societal in nature.

This Government has gone very far to lift the carpet beneath which all these matters have been swept, and I suggest to her and other Members of the Opposition that that is exactly what they are repeating when they ask for a standing committee. To suggest that we once again relegate discussions to the narrow confines of the committee room would, I submit, constitute regression and ghettoization.

**Miss MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, if this "born-again feminist" who was busy writing papers for the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1969 and 1970 could pose a question to the Minister responsible for the status of women, I want to ask first of all if the Minister can give us any more encouraging figures than the latest produced by the Government with regard to that 10 per cent of employees who work for the federal Public Service. At the administrative support level, that is the lowest category, the low-paid, locked-in, ghettoized jobs, we are talking about 65,000 women compared to 15,000 men. The number of women in that sector is increasing all the time. So I would like to ask whether or not there has been any reversal of that situation? There had not been in the five years from 1975 to 1980.

I would like to ask why there have been no amendments in this last year come before the House with regard to the discriminatory sections of the Unemployment Insurance Act, which blatantly discriminate against women who are pregnant

and have to take maternity leave at any time in the nine-month period, whether or not they are ill for some other reason.

Finally, I gathered from the Minister's remarks today that she is still advocating the abolition of the spousal tax exemption. That is what came through in her remarks and I would ask her to confirm or deny that.

**Mrs. Erola:** Mr. Speaker, I will take the last question first, if I may. I have never at any time advocated the removal of the spousal deduction. I said very clearly that I recommended it be included in the examination of family benefits; that we examine its effect on the women of Canada, particularly those at the lower income level. I do have some statistics, I believe, on just how that effects lower income families in our country. It is particularly interesting, Mr. Speaker, to note that those at the lower end of the scale benefit less. In fact, around the \$10,000 mark it is something like \$148. It is also interesting to note that at the lower end of the scale those with children benefit less than those without children, and I will be happy to provide those statistics to the Hon. Member.

On the subject of the spousal allowance, I would like to bring to the attention of the Hon. Member her words in *Hansard* of July 8, 1977 where she said:

—in the . . . spouse's allowance we have the demeaning situation where the older spouse, generally the male, has to give his written consent before the younger spouse, the woman, can collect the spouse's allowance. Has the Minister any idea of how degrading and demeaning this is to women? Does he have any idea what it means to women to be relegated to that second-class status? When will he come to a recognition that certain principles which reflect the self-worth of an individual are important because of what they mean in terms of human dignity and not merely in dollar terms?

I suggest to the Hon. Member that she, too, has had some concerns about the spousal allowance, concerns which I share. I should like to point to the most recent settlements of equal pay for work of equal value, and all of those situations which have come to bear in the last couple of years which have upgraded the status of women in the Public Service. I do not think the Hon. Member is aware of that.

**Miss MacDonald:** What about the other two questions?

**Mr. Hawkes:** Mr. Speaker, I think the exact words in the Minister's speech were that certain Canadians were being undertaxed. Could we have a better description of those Canadians who are being under-taxed?

**Mrs. Erola:** Mr. Speaker, I did not say they were being under-taxed. I simply said that the spousal allowance meant more to some taxpayers than to others.

● (1230)

**Mr. Kilgour:** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the Minister. The test of the pudding is in the tasting, not in talking about it or making reports about it. Will the Minister tell us how many Deputy Ministers appointed by the Government are women; how many executive or special assistants of Cabinet Ministers are women and how many Order in Council appointments of women have been made since March, 1980? In short, can she tell us what the Government has done,