

*Supply*

either a reduction in health and education services and social assistance benefits, or a tax hike?

Yet, on February 8, the Minister of Finance stated: "We are fully aware of the need to deal fairly with women's needs". Does the minister sincerely believe that fairness towards women lies in reducing their standard of living? And how does one explain the Secretary of State for the Status of Women's latest decision to abolish the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women?

The main role of this organization was to do research and disseminate information on problems affecting women. It also played the role of government watchdog by analyzing the economic impact of government actions and decisions on women. Yet, in the same speech in which she announced the abolition of this organization, the Secretary of State repeated the Prime Minister's comments: "For its part, the Canadian government has taken up the challenge. Women's equality is not a matter of special rights or interests. It is a matter of social and economic justice. It is a matter of good government".

The abolition of CACSW is not an example of good government that will help women meet the challenge of economic equality; in fact, it is just the opposite. Women's economic status is not improving. They are the first victims of the massive cuts in the federal public service. Some 45,000 jobs will be lost; and women will be hit the hardest. They are still earning only 72 per cent as much as their male colleagues. In 1920, they were making 50 per cent as much as their spouses. They still account for the majority of single parents, poor people, people living in inadequate housing, and victims of family violence. Women expect measures that will finally allow them to achieve the economic equality they are entitled to.

On March 8, 1994, the Secretary of State said this: "For the first time we have had a government sensitive to the different impact of programs and policies on women. It is a government willing to ensure that gender perspective is taken into consideration in all the proposed changes whether they are fiscal, social or juridical in nature". In fact, the decisions and actions taken clearly show this government's insensitivity to the inequality still plaguing women in Canada and Quebec. It is also obvious that this government has no intention of taking the necessary corrective measures.

• (1035)

It is obvious that this government truly deserves the severe criticisms levelled against it today by members of the opposition on behalf of Canadians and Quebecers. There is an urgent need to act instead of merely indulging in rhetoric. Is "Towards Equality" not the slogan adopted by the Canadian government to promote the world summit on women to be held in Beijing in September 1995? I think that this government is off on the

wrong foot. It will go there to brag about what it has failed to do at home.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments? No one? Did I hear correctly that you will share your time? Agreed.

The hon. member for Saint-Hubert.

**Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know full well that, each time the issue of status of women is raised, we lose a large part of our audience. It is not that too much time is devoted to this subject in this House. It is just that many people do not want to hear what we have to say and, more than anything else, they refuse to take action.

I will speak on the status of women anyway, and the status of women in the legal profession in particular. In Quebec, you can be a lawyer or a notary.

I will focus on women lawyers because, unfortunately, a committee has yet to be appointed to look specifically into the experience of women notaries in their everyday practice. All our statistics on women lawyers were provided to us by the Quebec bar association.

In the legal profession, women experience basically the same thing women experience in any area in which they work; by "work", I mean work outside of the home, of course.

If there has been such an influx of women on the labour market, outside of the home, we know this is due to a large extent to socioeconomic factors. It became necessary for women to help maintain the family income. This has been a determining factor.

In 1951, women accounted for less than 25 per cent of the Canadian labour force, as compared to 58 per cent of adult women in 1991. By far the biggest increase in the labour force participation rate occurred among women with young children, the majority of whom have full time jobs.

Women who, by necessity or by choice, head for a career in law face many difficulties inherent in this line of work. The dysfunctional relationships with male colleagues, the underrepresentation on the bench and the limited number of female teachers in our law faculties are but a few of the symptoms of a serious problem which persists in a world which claims to be eliminating injustice and unfairness.

Women are now part of the labour force, but female jurists form a distinct group. In the public's eye, we are perceived as being privileged. Yet, to become a disciple of Themis, a woman must overcome many obstacles which are not related to her status as a jurist, but to her status as a woman.

The Quebec Bar Association's committee on women lawyers, to which I alluded earlier, took a close look at the issues confronting female lawyers. Unfortunately, the chamber of notaries does not have a similar committee. A poll was conducted among women lawyers and the findings were released in