

*Social Security*

addition to equal pay for equal work for women working outside the home, an arrangement whereby they get paid for their services if they stay in the home, raise their children and care for their family.

This is not some futuristic hope that will never come to pass. We complain about the slowness of our progress in establishing women as persons, in establishing their equality, but it is on the march, and I submit that the day will come when they will have the kind of equality that is expressed in the idea that a woman should be free to go out to work or to work in the home but should not suffer economically if she chooses to work in the home. I should like to see something like this developed.

It can also be said that this is not completely foreign to our way of doing things. The family allowance which we now pay is, in effect, a payment to mothers to help them raise their children. We can turn that into an allowance to mothers or to homemakers. We can put it on a different basis and make it a much larger amount. All this can be worked out, but the main point I want to make is that in this House where there are so few women, it behooves the rest of us to face up to the fact that women do not yet have equality—they lack it in many ways. This is one of the key ways in which they lack that equality. They are not free to choose whether to work in the home or out of the home. We would increase that freedom, that equality, if there were allowances for those who stay at home.

As I said, in addition to establishing equality in the working years of our people, men and women, we would also improve the chances of equality in pensions on retirement if women had this kind of income during their working years and, since pensions are still somewhat related to earnings in the working years, their pensions would also be better.

● (1750)

I am happy to congratulate the hon. member for Bellechasse on bringing this matter once again before us. I hope the overwhelming number of men in this chamber will some day face up to the fact that if we think of women as persons, if we think they are wonderful, we should support equality for them down the line.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. J. R. Holmes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate for a few minutes in this important debate. Initially, I wish to compliment the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) on introducing the motion before us, one of great importance and one which he has placed before this chamber in the past. I must say I was a little surprised that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) would give his unqualified support to the particular motion before us. I say that in the context that he made a very important and pleading argument for equality for women across Canada. In my view there are important ingredients missing from the motion before us. It does not encompass some of the qualities I believe

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

are important if we are really to see equality of women across Canada.

I know I am limited as to time. With respect to my background, I want to view the matter from the standpoint of a particular medical problem. I would like to speak specifically about the emotional health of women. I say this because it is very relevant in terms of the context of the motion and relevant, in my view and in my experience in the community, in terms of the situation and the reality which exist in Canada today.

If I may I will take the liberty of referring to some scientific journals, something which may not come as much of a surprise to Mr. Speaker. I would refer, first, to a recent study which was carried out at the University of Michigan. This involved a group of some 1,143 women and their transition from school to the working world. It has some very interesting results to report. An article appeared in the January 1, 1979, issue of *Behaviour Today* and I think it important to quote from that particular study as follows:

Working outside, the home increases a woman's self-confidence and feelings of worth. The same is true for women who think of themselves as having or planning a career, whether or not they are currently employed . . . When we included age, educational attainment, marital status, number of children, length of employment, and salary, the salary variable proved to be the most important predictor of self-esteem. Marital status was a close second.

Given the results of that study, how large would the allowance proposed in this motion have to be to compensate for the loss of self-esteem that would be felt by women who gave up their jobs to become housewives?

Let me refer to a particularly important piece of work which was done by Dr. Janice Wetzel of the University of Texas. She found that women in general are three times more likely than men to suffer from acute depression, and that women now constitute three quarters of those living in American nursing homes. I am sure any hon. members in the House who have had experience in this area are acutely aware and conscious of this particular fact. It is not unreasonable to assume that this difference in the incidence of acute depression is closely related to differences in life patterns as between men and women. An adult life spent as a housewife may well lead to a greater likelihood of experiencing severe depression.

It seems unlikely that the proposed allowance would overcome this particular aspect of the problem. Another study which I felt was most important, and which I believe to be relevant to this debate, showed benefit to women's mental health of a move away from the traditional role as housewives. This was conducted by Dr. Srole and Dr. Anita Fischer in New York. It is rather interesting because this study showed that when men and women in the age groups of 40 to 49 and 50 to 59 were interviewed in 1954, women were found to be mentally impaired to a significantly greater extent than were men in the same age groups. But what is important is that when the research was repeated 20 years later among the same age groups, it was found that the mental health problems of women who had grown up in the latter, less restrictive years, were lower than previously and proved to be quite close to the level experienced by the men interviewed.