

Supply

Let me also point out that I think my predecessor in this role, the Hon. Member for Waterloo (Mr. McLean), the former Minister responsible for the status of women, deserves an enormous amount of credit for the progress made in Nairobi and the document which came out of there.

● (1440)

Progress is also being made in dealing with family violence, with the federal, provincial and territorial governments co-operating in what is a very complex social problem and one which governments cannot resolve alone; but they can provide some attention and some perspective to this very serious problem. A commitment to improvements in family violence legislation was in our Speech from the Throne last fall. In concert with the release on March 30 of the report of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care, discussions with the provinces on this priority subject are well under way. Our goal is to reach an agreement on an approved child care system for Canada by this summer.

Let me pursue this a little bit. Child care occupies a pre-eminent position in our Government's agenda. At last November's First Ministers' Conference the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) described adequate child care as one of the most significant factors in ensuring the economic security of women. He went on to say that for many women child care is the key that will open the door to future equality. At the same time he made a government commitment and a personal commitment to improve the accessibility, the affordability and the flexibility to quality child care in Canada. We are well aware that the needs of women vary from a rural setting, to an urban setting from some regions of the country to another.

Let me point out that when I talk about these not being new problems, this one in particular is not a new problem. This is something that was called an urgent problem by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women some 17 years ago. Why did nothing happen for 17 years, Mr. Speaker?

But we have made considerable progress on this.

We are sitting down with the provinces and actually working out a practical solution to these problems for the women of Canada. Child care featured very largely in the First Ministers' Conference last November. A full half day was devoted to women's issues which included training and child care.

Let me say that I am very proud of the Prime Minister and the role he played in putting those items on the agenda. It was the first time women's issues had been on the agenda at a First Ministers' Conference. It was a follow-up to what had happened the year before under the Prime Minister's leadership at the conference when they agreed on a framework for economic equality. Those discussions represented a real breakthrough for the women of this country when the leaders of all our provinces and our Prime Minister were there together publicly discussing their commitment to women.

It has been a hallmark of this Government to include women in all of our decision making processes from First Ministers'

Conferences, to budget consultations, to policy development in almost every aspect. We attach the utmost importance to this ongoing dialogue which is carried on by myself and by the Prime Minister with a variety of women's organizations including the National Council of Women, la Fédération des femmes du Québec, the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Catholic Women's League, the National Action Committee, the Native Women's Association, the National Association of Immigrant Visible Minority Women and REAL Women. I have travelled Canada from one end to the other talking not just to the groups who come to Ottawa to see me but talking to women who are working in their communities, in their local libraries and local schools, working on behalf of women in communities everywhere from Cornerbrook, Newfoundland to Cranbrook, British Columbia. I will continue to do that because it is not just the women who come to Ottawa in an organized way who are to be heard from, it is the women working on the farms in southern Saskatchewan, the women in North Battleford who have opened a new library, the women in southern Ontario who are helping their husbands on the farms, the women in northern Ontario who work in the mines. They are the voices who should be heard in this town and by this Government, and they are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. McDougall: Let me say as well that we have met with representatives of groups to discuss very specific issues and we will be meeting again with the NAC executive and many of its members on Monday. Many of our members will be there. Complementing this process, a dialogue, of course, has been our determination to bring more women into positions of power and influence.

The Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) talked about this participation of women in roles of leadership and in politics.

[*Translation*]

During the 1984 election campaign, we had promised, if elected, to increase from 15 per cent to 30 per cent the rate of representation of women in federal agencies, boards and commissions. Only halfway through our mandate, the rate is now 27 per cent. It is only a beginning, but it is quite significant. Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers occupy also key positions in the Public Service. When we came to power, there were only three women appointed at that high level. There are now nine, including the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, as well as the Deputy Minister of Labour, the Deputy Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Deputy Minister of Supply and Services, and the Deputy Minister of Privatization. The incumbents of these positions of trust can make key contributions and may even further the economic and social advancement of all women.

[*English*]

I mentioned earlier that the Canadian Forces will be undertaking trials with women in combat. Let me mention as