

*Supply*

surprised, but I want him to have peace of mind, I do not want him to worry—the money previously earmarked for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women will be reallocated to research conducted by Status of Women Canada and by women's groups, universities and other organizations.

We are going to see what happens, and we are going to consult on the reallocation, but the money for independent research will be—and this is a commitment I made yesterday—given to arm's length institutions and the results will be published in the interest of women, for women, and will not be touched by the government.

I needed that. Did you think I was going to take this money away from women's organizations? No, you started this for petty political purposes. I must say that this kind of system will be much more efficient. I also find strange that my opposition colleague would criticize the action of the federal government when the Province of Quebec recently restructured its own department on women's equality and she did not say a word. This demonstrates, on her part, a great interest in the status of women in Canada and I commend her for that.

I should make it clear that by consolidating all women's programs into Status of Women Canada we are working in the best interests of all women.

• (1545)

I know that some women are concerned that merging the advisory council with my department would essentially mean that the government could help itself to its funding. Far from it. I will not be a minister all my life. I have worked long enough not to want to pull the rug out from under women's feet, regardless of the government. I worked for ten years on the other side of this House and know how women can be misled and their interests forgotten. Such policies, they are smoke and mirrors; and they did not serve us well. This is not the type of policies this government wants to implement.

This government relies on the public, on women's organizations, to monitor our work and to tell us what they think of our performance. I must say that since my appointment, I have travelled a lot, I have met lots of women all over Canada, more than a hundred or so organizations. I chaired the working group on child care. I listened. This government listens. In Cabinet, we talk about women's interests and we will continue to do so.

We now have a very diversified, very competent network of people who are able to appear before us, whether it be on issues of violence or others. The Minister of Justice and I organized a round table on that subject. Forty groups participated. Some 70 persons came. The government, not the advisory council, paid for these consultations.

When the Minister of Human Resources Development held his consultations, a task force was set up. This cost money, but I insisted on it. No later than three hours after the presentation of the budget, I received a phone call requesting permission to hold consultations across Canada.

As a result of this change, we will no longer have a large office in Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver. The appointment of women by order in council has become a thing of the past. These offices will be closed, but in each region of Canada, in each city, there are women working closely with the people, who know who should get funded and who should not. They are able to organize gatherings, as they have been doing for me up to now, allowing me to meet people.

I just met with the Quebec women's federation, RESO, Charlotte Thibeault's coalition. These women mentioned that they research the issues they bring forward, but that otherwise they are not involved in research; they complained a lot about the way research is being carried out. I said that, from now on, research will be done according to the needs identified by women's groups and academics, that the choice of who will do it will be theirs, and that results will be published.

You do not like it? Too bad. I believe it is the way it should be done. We will consult women's groups as to the process. It may not be what you want, but I believe that it is the best way for women. Judging by the work women did in preparation for the Beijing meeting, I know that we are making progress. There are still a lot of problems, but we are making progress. Women on this committee held consultations with 2,500 women across Canada. They drafted answers and helped Status of Women to make improvements to the draft working paper.

I believe that the links, the co-operation and the mutual respect we established in many ways are in the interest of everyone.

• (1550)

In this way we are going to improve research and get more out of our consultations. We will be much more direct. We will use a "one-stop shopping" concept, research will be conducted by outside sources, independently, and all aspects of the library, etc, will also be reviewed, as well as distribution, because we will begin using all kinds of new technology. Women are quite advanced in this area.

I know that some people believe that we have stifled the voice of an important women's association and even silenced it. This is not true. This statement only confuses matters. The organization which was closed down was financed 100 per cent by the federal government.