

*War Appropriation—Labour*

brought to my attention many facts and proves conclusively that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction.

I myself am one of those who feel very strongly the need for the care of small children. We are lauding the place of women in our war effort, but unless we realize the penalty which many women have to pay for taking a job and at the same time being responsible for the care of their children, we are not really giving women an opportunity to take up to the maximum their share of responsibility.

When he was speaking on Wednesday, June 23, the minister paid a fine tribute to the women of Canada. He is reported to have said, at page 3941 of *Hansard*:

If I had unlimited time I would amaze this house by reciting the occupations in which women are now employed. I will simply mention that they are now employed in sawmill operations, in the delivery of ice, in surface operations at the International Nickel Company's mines, and we are to use them at surface work in our coal mines.

And again he said:

For the mother who must go out to work, the care of her children is a vital and often distressing problem. Her peace of mind requires assurance that the smallest children are in safe hands throughout the day and that the older ones have supervision after school hours. Only then can she give her mind fully to the job in hand.

The knowledge I have of children's day nurseries extends only to the two largest cities, Toronto and Montreal. The joint dominion-provincial scheme, although it may have appeared to the government to be the best, is I think the cause of some unnecessary delay in the setting up of these nurseries. There appears to be delay when the board in the city of Toronto has applied for certain buildings in connection with day nurseries, because the provincial government then has to apply to the dominion government and time elapses before anything is really done. It is an astounding thing that in a city the size of Toronto, where we have so many thousands of women workers, we are actually taking care of only roughly 280 children of pre-school age. The reason why the government has not made further progress is that the whole question of creches and day nurseries is regarded as a temporary measure, merely something to fulfil the needs of war time. In my opinion this is an incorrect premise upon which to build a scheme of this kind. The emancipation of women as wage-earners has come to stay. It is not just a temporary war measure. I feel I am speaking the views of every Canadian woman when I say that the women of Canada do not want, after the war is over, any sugges-

[Mrs. Nielsen.]

tion that the only place fit for them is the home. The old slogan which was trotted out before the women of Germany, that the only things that they were fit for were kirchen, kuchen, kindern, is not applicable to the women of a democracy, and women will not be content to work only within the limits of their homes. They realize that the fullest and widest extension of democracy is necessary that they shall be able to take their place in full equality with men in the whole social and economic structure of this country.

The day nurseries which have been started during the war were started, of course, as a war-time emergency, but the need for day nurseries was felt long before the war started and will continue and grow after the war is over. Among the low income groups, mothers have for a good many years been forced to work, and the need they have for care of their children has always been great. The first years of a child's life are the ones in which the child needs the best care and the most careful training. The years leading up to school age are those in which habits are formed. But in many homes, among the poorer working people, the mothers have been overburdened with housework as well as the work they have done outside their homes to earn a living, and it has been a terrible thing for the children that these mothers have not been able to devote the time they should have devoted to the care and training of the pre-school age children.

Among the higher income groups, too, I would say that there has also been a need, and still is and always will be, for nurseries to take care of children. In the higher income groups we find not so many children to a family, but I think it would be quite correct to say that some of the mothers in the higher income groups do not have any better knowledge or understanding of child training and child psychology than the mothers in the lower income groups. Sometimes the children in those homes where there is a better income are petted too much and given an exaggerated sense of their own importance. They are not trained in social habits. Children who have suffered from a lack of training in their very early years, when they grow up to adult life and take their place in society, often become known, for want of a better term, as "rugged individualists". There are too many of this type in our society to-day. They are the cause of many of our social ills. The present generation of "rugged individualists" will die off sooner or later, and we do not want to raise another generation of this type in Canada. I would say that the pre-school nursery is the answer.