

*The Constitution*

Jewett), that there was not one person from the Liberal government benches who was there throughout the meeting, and there were no women from the Liberal Party.

The proposals in the charter before this House and this nation were prepared by a cabinet of which one woman is a member. They were prepared by a bureaucracy which is headed by men in almost every case. It is small wonder that the women present were very concerned as to whether their concerns will be met.

**Mr. Corbin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member who presently has the floor noted the absence of women members from the Liberal side at the weekend meeting of women from across Canada. I point out to the hon. member that this party was represented, not by one but by many members in the constitutional committee, and they listened to the requests of women from across Canada. The party opposite was not represented by one.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Waterloo has the floor. This appears to be an exchange.

**Mr. McLean:** The conference raised the question whether the transitory majority will impose its will. Will it not hear the concerns of 51 per cent of the Canadian population? Women have not yet ruled out whether they, along with other concerned groups, will find themselves having to lobby overseas. The importance of this meeting cannot be underestimated because it was a reminder that no longer can decisions be made in Canada without women being part of them.

When questioned clearly as to whether the provisions as they now stand in the human rights charter are acceptable, a panel of women lawyers thoughtfully commented that there are no guarantees that women will be any better off than they are now. The words in the charter are too ambiguous. You either have equality or you do not. It is hard to have a little bit of equality. Those women lawyers went on to suggest that there are other dangers, such as the danger of entrenching discrimination on the basis of culture, and that these concerns need to be addressed. It is small wonder the conference found itself anxious about the time-frame and the limited opportunity.

Women are also unsure where the government stands. A headline in the *Ottawa Citizen* on Thursday, February 19, reads: "Women unsure where Axworthy stands". The former president of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Doris Anderson, took exception to the comments of the Minister of Justice in his opening remarks in this debate. She objected on Wednesday to the minister's quoting her as saying that the changes are a major step forward. According to the *Ottawa Citizen*:

Anderson said at a news conference that the government has come a long way toward meeting the needs of women in its proposed charter of rights, but that doesn't mean it has come far enough. . . "to make it absolutely clear that Canadian women have equality in this country . . . changes should be made."

Changes are recommended in the thoughtful brief which is presently before the government and the minister for consideration. The resolution of that conference was that it endorsed in principle the concept of an entrenched charter of rights as per

the recommendations made on February 14, 1981, and that unless the charter reflects the amendments suggested, it should not be included in the submission to the British government in order to provide time to incorporate these amendments.

I know that the House and the women of Canada will be waiting for the minister responsible for the status of women to comment on this thoughtful submission which has been given to him.

In their resolution the women went on to say that, failing the full adoption of these amendments, incorporation of a charter of rights should be accomplished by a constituent assembly, the membership of which should be 50 per cent women. They went on in their review of the charter to say, for example, that there should be an amendment to Clause 1 of the charter so that it will include a statement of purpose providing that the rights and freedoms under the charter are guaranteed equally to women, and with no limitation. What they are saying is "Do it right."

They go on in another thoughtful recommendation, which is before the government, to suggest that Clause 7 be amended to include the right to equality of economic opportunity. Why are women so concerned about economic opportunity? Economic opportunity has not been incorporated in this document, and that reflects the reality of the discrimination. In a pamphlet published by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women the following facts are outlined:

● (1420)

51 per cent of working-age Canadians are women.

47.8 per cent of all women are working or looking for work, compared to 37.1 per cent in 1968.

38.9 per cent of the labour force are women: an increase of more than 6 per cent in the last 10 years.

1,635,000 women have joined the labour force since 1968, compared to 1,296,000 men.

They go on to write about employment discrimination in these terms:

For every dollar a man earns, a woman earns only 60 cents—

Women have to work more than eight days to earn the same money that men do in five days.

And so the litany goes on. They remind us that:

4.9 per cent of working women are in managerial-administrative positions.

62.7 per cent of all women working for pay are in clerical, sales or service jobs:

36.9 per cent in clerical, 9.4 per cent in sales, and 16.4 per cent in service.

The discrimination is known and the facts are becoming more and more part of our thinking, but the process of meeting these concerns and the time required in order to see that these injustices are addressed in our Constitution, as in so many other areas, have not been provided. I want to suggest that not only has the women's conference focused on injustice, on deep concern and a rising awareness—small wonder that the minister was not anxious that that meeting should be held in terms of its comments on the proposal that the women are determined to move quickly with as much understanding as possible at the grass roots level across the country—but at the conclusion of the conference the women said that the process of