

The Address—Mr. Munro (Hamilton East)

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Hopefully these provisions will end that very unfortunate situation which occurs all too often. A new relocation directive and a revised foreign service directive have already been issued and amendments have been made to such regulations as those covering conditions and terms of employment in the public service and payments to estates.

The government's endeavours to ensure equal opportunity to its women employees have been outlined on a number of occasions. One of the important elements of the program was the cabinet directive addressed to deputy heads of departments in April, 1972 directing them to undertake steps to encourage the assignment and advancement of more women into middle and upper echelon positions. We shall now be directing a request along those lines to Crown corporations.

All these activities are designed to meet the objective set out in the Speech from the Throne, that of creating a society free from discrimination. However, as I indicated early in my statement, more than government legislation is required. The recognition of society in general of women's changing status is a pre-requisite of true equality. It is with this in mind that the government is developing its program to celebrate Women's Year in 1975. That year has been designated by the United Nations as one in which efforts will be made to promote equality of women in all aspects of society. We in Canada have decided to take advantage of the United Nations proclamation in order to give special emphasis to the changing attitudes of women, and changing attitudes about women. Preliminary planning has begun. An inter-departmental committee has been meeting for some time and a special secretariat to implement the program is being established. Consultation will be undertaken in the near future with provincial governments as well as non-government organizations. A major part of our program will be designed to reach those in the community who have not yet been involved, both those whose lives are being affected by the changes and those who are in a position to effect those changes. The main element will be a series of regional and national conferences as well as an informational and education campaign involving the public media.

Knowing how important is the role of non-government organizations, especially of the many women's organizations which have been fighting for changes over the years, we shall also be making available to these groups increased financial assistance for the development of special projects for International Women's Year. Within the federal government, each department and agency will be undertaking special programs and realigning priorities in 1975 to promote equal opportunity for women both in their programs as they affect the public and for their women employees.

On the international level, the role of the Canadian government in improving the status of women has received particular recognition. Canada has been asked by the United Nations to host an international seminar during the summer of 1974. The experts will concentrate on elaborating a model of permanent machinery at the national level for improving the status of women and promoting equality of the sexes at all levels of society. This seminar will form part of the United Nations adviso-

[Mr. Stanfield.]

ry services program in the field of human rights. In addition, every attempt will be made to increase the number of women representing Canada at international conferences of all kinds.

It is hoped the activities foreseen for International Women's Year will heighten the awareness of the people of Canada of the new role of women and indicate the government's support of it.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): May I first of all join with the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) and others who have spoken in this debate in extending congratulations to Their Excellencies on taking up their new responsibilities and also to the mover (Mr. Stollery) and seconder (Mr. Pelletier) of the address.

I believe that over the years the significance of this debate has been somewhat eroded, partly due to the changes in the rules which now oblige members of parliament to inject into this discussion matters which were formerly taken care of in the committee of supply. I believe this debate should be one in which members of parliament, whether in the treasury benches or elsewhere, should take an over-view of the situation. They should concern themselves as to where we are going as a nation and, whether or not we feel this or any other government has the will or capability to lead this nation, whether our goals are leading us to the point we hope to reach. This debate should give an opportunity for us to look at the whole forest. Because of the operation of the rules in the last number of years, I feel we are usually looking at the trees, and there is no opportunity to take an over-view of the whole situation.

● (1520)

If we do not do that we find the government staggering from one crisis to another with ad hoc solutions and policies of putting salve on the blisters to ease the pains and ills of our society rather than being able to take the time to diagnose the cause of those ills and pains. As a result there is a tendency for people to take a rather jaundiced view of parliament, and perhaps they have lost confidence not only in this government, which I think is justified, but in this parliament, which is less justified, and perhaps in our whole system, which is completely unjustified. This situation arises partly because of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. I would be so bold as to suggest that the sacred cow, the media, is not entirely without some responsibility in this field.

I know that the press gallery is composed chiefly of men who are well enough educated and hard working, but it would seem that on many occasions the important things which are going to be vital to this nation in the future, and the proper presentation of them, are not the things that sell newspapers. I am told that the people who report the happenings of parliament do a good job in that they discriminate as to what is important, pick those things out and give them proper prominence in contrast to some things that are just spectacular or sensational. One cynic has said that the trouble is that the people they work for spend all their time separating the wheat from the chaff and then print the chaff. I am not sure about that and therefore will not have anything further to say in that regard as I do not consider myself qualified to do so, but