

enough power and should have had more. I thought Queen Victoria was a lady of considerable ability, and if anyone would have made it perfectly obvious that women should be treated equally it would be her. I hope the hon. member's suggestion is not that the most powerful woman in history should have been given more power, remembering that her husband played a very subservient role in comparison with her status.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know when the hon. member tuned into my speech, but the point I was trying to make was that Queen Victoria was a person who obviously was a prisoner of her own time, reflecting a view commonly held by a great number of women at that time concerning the woman's role in society. At the same time, however, she supported a double standard because she was willing to acknowledge for herself a great number of powers but was in no way willing to see such powers exercised by her colleagues in her day and age. I cited this as an illustration of the fact that while it may seem a long time since the reign of Queen Victoria, in the history of the world it is but a short time. When we hear a statement like that now we think we are living in a completely different age, and that there is absolute equality and acceptance for women. We could well ask the question, as I ask it rhetorically this afternoon, are women accepted as equals in our society, or should we be concerned about the increasing number of demonstrations and discussions centring on the role and status of women in society? I answer that we must be concerned, and concerned for a number of reasons.

Time will not permit me to deal with all of the reasons this afternoon, but we should recognize the fact that in our civilization today we have a most unique situation in which we have in our midst an oppressed not minority but majority. Unlike many minorities who suffer because of racial, religious or ethnic considerations, women in our society, who are not even a minority but perhaps a majority, are oppressed. Women in our day are oppressed in a new and much more sophisticated fashion and that is why I find the speeches made this afternoon, and the motion proposed by the hon. member, unsatisfactory to a degree. Essentially, I am not criticizing the motion for going too far, but rather I feel the motion does not go far enough. I must immediately hasten to add that I would have great difficulty in drafting an effective motion to try and deal with what is a very pervasive and thorough going form of discrimination towards women which exists in our society.

• (4:40 p.m.)

It is all too easy to recall times when, because of technology and the nature of society, a woman was very obviously in a discriminated position. She was treated almost as a beast of burden; she stayed at the hearth and carried out all of the chores. As one person has said before, and as has been repeated many times since, a woman's work is from sun to sun. She did all the manual tasks necessary to maintain that family unit. She suffered drudgery to such an extent that today, when you

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walk through an old cemetery, you can see recorded on the tombstones the premature deaths of a host of the women of this country.

**An hon. Member:** Men, too.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** We know as well that there was a particular horror associated with giving birth. In a sense, a life of desperation was lived by the women in earlier times in relationship to their fellows in society. We rejoice in the fact that women have been released from the drudgery of the kitchen and the home, that they have been spared much of the horrible pain and possible death by childbirth. We rejoice that it is now possible to think of the woman's role in the home as one that at least does not involve being treated as some kind of willing slave.

In moving from that difficult time into an era of great technology, I suggest that we are now permitting, and indeed encouraging, a new kind of exploitation of woman. I think it has been referred to as "sexploitation", in which woman herself is being treated in many cases as a consumer product, as an item to be selected from the shelf, to be packaged, labelled and presented for easy consumption. We have been treated to a host of beauty contests and activities which primarily promote the biological aspects of woman. In its most extreme form, we have been treated to the concept of woman as a plaything, as a bunny for the playboys of the world.

The tragedy of this new form of discrimination is that in establishing standards for women in our society, the standards are such that they are measured not in terms of individual integrity or identity but in terms of proportions, measurements, bustlines, what have you. The tragedy is that while men to some slight degree might be forgiven for making these measurements and standards, certain women all too readily acquiesce and give credence to the thought that everything depends on how a woman can present herself. It is too bad that some women are willing to measure themselves by these standards of sexploitation.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that by allowing this to happen in society we have indeed subverted and destroyed not only the possible role and fulfilment of woman in society, but we have downgraded to an effective degree the possible relationship that might exist between man and woman. The perfect female citizen of this country, if we are to listen to the commercials, spends the morning at the mirror, the afternoon in a bubble bath, and the evening discussing breath mints or candy mints at some amusement park. The parallel to this is that, of course, man is always at the job or driving or flying to it. It is small wonder that the more extreme women's liberation groups seethe with a pathological hatred aimed at the various males who have concocted these two public images of male and female.

In discussing what I think is a basic problem in our society today, obviously I am dealing with a problem that cannot easily be changed through legislation. I think it would be a challenge far surpassing the abilities of the