

Women in the work force also have suffered exceedingly this past year. In a year when we should be improving their situation and when the Speech from the Throne promised to improve their situation for women in Canada, the condition of women in the work force has worsened considerably.

More than ever before women are locked into low-paying job ghettos in clerical sales and service fields, fields where they will soon be phased out by technological change, as other speakers have documented. Women have little chance for promotion. In fact, the Government's record of promotion within the federal Public Service is deplorable. There are fewer women in middle management and senior positions now than there were a few years ago. If they are not already unemployed, many women are very insecure in their jobs, expecting to be the next to go, or they are being reduced to part-time jobs. Again this is a situation which the Government is almost promoting—the whole concept of part-time work. We know that it is usually women who are forced into part-time jobs with part-time pay, with no opportunity to get ahead and, of course, usually in non-unionized situations.

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As times get tougher men move into the few well paid jobs which have been female dominated, such as those in the field of teaching and nursing, as was documented recently by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. There are few promotions for women into executive and management jobs, certainly not in the federal Public Service. The only gains women are making seem to be in some of the professions. I think one of the most positive developments is the increasing number of very bright, competent young women entering the field of law. They are entering law because they are determined to right the wrongs and to work for further equality for women.

I spoke yesterday to a business and professional women's group in Vancouver. I was pleased to hear that many women who have held junior jobs in businesses, banks, and so on, are now moving into their own small businesses. The failure rate for businesswomen has been much lower than for businessmen, which is another positive sign for women. But it is thanks to the women themselves, not to Government action.

Last week I also attended the annual conference of the National Association of Women and the Law which was held in Victoria. For two days they discussed at great length the whole situation of the economy as it affects women, as well as technological change which is phasing women out of traditional areas of work. Group after group and expert after expert who spoke to this conference insisted that the only way to protect women against this kind of inequality in the work place is to have mandatory affirmative action. That is why, upon my return to the House, I questioned the Minister responsible for the status of women on the Government's position on mandatory affirmative action. This was very important to the many groups, the ones who are the most knowledgeable about this aspect who attended that conference. I was extremely disappointed the Minister ignored the question of mandatory affirmative action and contract compliance—and instead gave us a lot of platitudes about what this Government is doing.

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This Government is doing nothing in a positive way respecting the whole question of affirmative action.

We must keep insisting on the legal right of women to equal pay for work of equal value. This must start at the federal Government level, at the provincial Government level and at the local Government level. I would urge women across this country to get after their Governments and insist that the standards be set in the Public Service.

Women across Canada have been studying the impact of microtechnology and automation which threatens their economic future even more than does the present recession and, heaven knows, that is serious enough. It is essential for the Government to get involved in this area much more directly. I think it is important to encourage some kind of charter of economic rights to impress upon employers that they must protect women in the work place from the hazards of VDTs, and so on. Employers must plan with employees for future layoffs and future technological changes. Employers must get involved in retraining and they must give women equal opportunities to move into the new technologies, management and supervisory positions.

The Government has held conferences on this subject, but we have to have more than conferences. We need real leadership. The best protection women have is to belong to a union and to have a union fighting for these rights, making sure that women have equal rights in the work force. Unfortunately, many of the job areas we are talking about are not unionized, which makes things difficult. Usually these are the areas in which women are first displaced.

There must be a greater opportunity for women to train in non-traditional fields of work, such as the trades. The Minister for Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) spoke of the Government's record in this field. I know he is aware of the need in this area. I know he is trying, and I will give him credit for that. However, I cannot understand, when I listen to him talking about all the wonderful things he is doing, why it is that week after week in my constituency women tell me that they cannot get into apprentice training courses or pre-apprentice training, nor can they get child care. Women who live outside of urban centres have absolutely no hope of getting into these fields. At the moment it is far from practical for women to get into these non-traditional fields of work such as the trades.

While pressing for equality in the work force, we must also make sure that social services are not eroded, particularly those needed by women, whatever their age. This House is well aware of the increase in the number of battered wives and the need for transition houses in the community. Not enough is being done about that. The Government itself needs to be called to task, and it needs to take a look at the recommendations that we all agreed to last spring.

Women with young children, especially those on their own and working, need affordable child care. They need family support centres of different kinds. This is another area in