

*Status of Women Study*

well known cliché in reference to the ladies being the weaker sex.

That weaker sex, I submit, has made gigantic strides considering the great handicap with which they started. If we go back a millennium, certainly in the period A.D., we have seen women make enormous progress. Men once debated whether or not a woman had a soul. Some have said women were the first domestic animals of the male. This is a situation which actually existed in one society. They were excluded from education and from the professions. They were regarded as chattels. Then came that period of the romantic glow when knighthood was in flower, and suddenly the feminine mystique blossomed in the romantic aura of courtly love.

But I suppose the greatest step forward was in the industrial revolution when the militant feminists first appeared in our culture. This period extended from the end of the nineteenth century to about 1930, the period marked by the militancy of the suffragettes and the ladies who led the campaign against demon rum. Actually, I suppose we must give them credit for introducing prohibition through the political process. In Manitoba we had a most interesting representative of the suffragette movement in Mrs. Nellie McClung, who brought down a government by her forceful feminine militancy. I am sure Mrs. McClung, who is being commemorated for her part in the feminist movement by having her home declared a national historic shrine, deserves all the credit she is now receiving even if posthumously as is so often the case in respect of those who play an important role in advancing specific social issues.

It was the vigour of the feminist movement of that period which led Emmeline Pankhurst to elevate the role of women almost to the level of a deity since she is supposed to have used the famous words, "trust in God; she will provide". Certainly there was some of the power and influence we usually attribute to the Godhead in the movement that was a very important part of the social change and involvement during the first 30 years of this century.

There is a new dimension to the current feminist movement which should be noted. It is the most strident feminist activity that has appeared during the period of history to which I have been referring briefly tonight. It is part of the radical left which repudiates all values. It is represented mostly by the extremely young, sometimes the very beautiful and quite often the permissive element of the youth culture which often has been represented in the protests which have been made on our university campuses. If we attempted to analyse the situation in detail, we would find it results from the period of prolonged adolescence which is a part of our current social situation when young people remain in university for as long as ten years in the search for an identity in a rapidly changing society.

These people sometimes become quite violent in their expressions concerning issues about which they are particularly concerned. We had a demonstration of that in this chamber not too many months ago, and in the 20 years I have been a member of this House it is the only time I have seen a protest group bring the deliberations

of Parliament to a temporary cessation. I am sure Your Honour will recollect the vigour, vociferousness and strident nature of that event. This, as I see it, is one of the aspects of the current feminist movement which doesn't help create a positive image on behalf of the women of our society who after all have a legitimate claim.

● (9:00 p.m.)

Actually, without prejudice, I think I can say the women have done quite well for themselves in the western culture. They have achieved the heights in the professions, the arts, the sciences. There is one area where the role of women, of course, is unique and indispensable. I do not think we will ever get around the very basic and elementary fact that women of the world are the mothers of the race. Even though there have been such flights of philosophical fancy as those of Aldous Huxley in his "Brave New World", where he anticipated the elimination of the basic role of the other sex through the use of test tubes, and so forth, I believe that era is still far off in the fantastic future.

As someone said when they were debating in the chamber of deputies in France during the suffragette movement following World War I, "After all, there is very little difference between men and women in our society", whereupon an enthusiastic voice was heard to exclaim, "Vive la différence". I am sure that that basic difference is one that will be perpetuated and is not likely to be subject to change, no matter how many Parliaments deliberate on the matter or how many voices are raised in protest.

The basic role of women in every nation is that of being the cornerstone of the family. You can put into better words the fundamental role of women in our society than those of the wedding ceremony in which most of us have taken part at some time or another in our life, namely, "to have and to hold, to love and to cherish until death do us part". There is no doubt that the role of women is changing in our industrial, urbanized society. I think it is changing for the better. In the family relationship there is now a partnership, a companionship, a sense of equality between husband and wife. There is now a deeper appreciation of the other half of the partnership on the part of the husband, the helpmate role that has even been recognized by the man who has the highest position in the nation and the greatest responsibility, our own Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). This is a fundamental role and, as I say, it is the cornerstone of society.

I believe that the role of the housewife, even though women are more and more entering into various aspects of the work world, is the basic and most important challenge that any woman can assume and accept in this confused day and age. Some say that there is a great revolution going on in mores, moral codes and the other disturbing changes that are taking place in society. But if you get down to the essence of the problem you will find that there is no real revolution in mores, and the majority of women as well as men believe that the basic function of sex in perpetuating the species should go only