

Supply

has come for us to recognize that in terms of more progressive legislation in Canada.

Mrs. Mary Collins (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate today. As several members have already mentioned, it is appropriate that this debate is taking place on the Friday before Mother's Day, a day when all of us give recognition to our mothers and the contributions they have made to our lives in terms of what we are doing today as Members of Parliament. I am sure that many of us are here because of the encouragement we received from our mothers.

I am also pleased to be speaking in this debate because many of us here are mothers. We think about the future of our daughters. We want to create a better future and better opportunities for them. I hope that my male colleagues who have daughters share my hopes and aspirations.

We hear a great deal from women about their problems. They often have differing opinions with respect to how they feel the Government should respond to these problems. In fact, there are a great many women today who say that they do not want anything special, they just want to be treated the same as their male colleagues. As the Minister responsible for the status of women mentioned earlier, this is a philosophy, and one with which I agree. The problem for so many years has been that women have started behind. What we have to do is to close the gap so that men and women start together at the starting gate. From there they can obviously move ahead based on their own ability and their own possibilities. However, because of traditions and because of many years of attitudes, women have not been equal at the starting gate.

Earlier, in questions I posed to the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone), I talked about there being among many younger women something which I find disturbing in that they have limited aspirations. They do not see all the choices that are out there for them. They think of their lives in fairly romanticized terms. They think that they will grow up, get married and be looked after for the rest of their lives. We know that is not the reality of life in Canada today, certainly not for all women.

The other difference that exists between men and women is the biological reality of women as the bearers of children and their primary care givers. Fortunately, that, too, is changing in our society and men are playing a greater role. They are accepting responsibility for their children. However, women are the ones who still tend to look after the children, who take them to child care and look after the home to a great extent. In fact, some of my women friends have often said that the best thing they could get on Mother's Day would be to have their spouses look after the arrangements for child care, dentist appointments and lessons for a whole year for them. That would be a great present that some men could give to their wives.

The reality associated with being child care givers is that it limits women's opportunities for participation in the workforce

and thus limits their economic equality. I will come back to some of these issues later on in my remarks.

Although I know that there are many women in the country who are tremendously successful and who are reaching high levels of achievement I would like to say to them that I hope they will share with me the responsibility for bringing along our sisters, because not all women are as fortunate as we are and they need role models. They need other women to help them along to achieve the same heights.

I wish to say a few words about women in the political process and in the decision-making process as this forms part of my colleague's motion today. As we have already heard, we have made great progress here at the federal level. As has been mentioned, there have only been 38 female Members of Parliament since 1921. There are now 27 of us in this Parliament, which is obviously a tremendous improvement. However, it is not improvement enough, but it is substantial progress. We hope that this figure will double, and then triple and that ultimately 50 per cent of Members in this House will be women. That will ensure that the views and experiences of women are felt in all our decisions.

It would be interesting, and I have not done this, to look at the debates of both the committees and the House and to consider the participation by female members therein. Although only 10 per cent of the members here are women, I am sure that their contributions in debate are much greater than 10 per cent in terms of all our discussions and deliberations in this House and in committee.

Canada is now being looked to as a very progressive country with respect to the advancement of women in the political process. Only this week the Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) told me that she had just come back from meetings in the Far East. While she was in Hong Kong meeting with business people and talking about trade and investment opportunities in Canada, the people with whom she was meeting said to her: "It is very interesting, Madam, that you are the Minister for International Trade for your country. You have a High Commissioner in Hong Kong who is an outstanding woman and who is doing an excellent job. Over the past few months we have also had visits from members of your Government such as your Minister of Communications (Miss MacDonald), your Minister for External Relations (Mrs. Landry) and your Governor General". As we all know, these people are women. The comment to the Minister for International Trade was: "Don't you have any men in your Government?" Well, we do.

Fortunately, women are achieving so much on the international scene that we are really seeing progress. I know that at some of the international meetings I have attended Canada is the only country that will have women along as senior delegates. I would like to compliment the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) for their constant vigilance and support in ensuring that women are always part of every delegation and