

Routine Proceedings

addition to the basic amount of \$500 which they must pay just to have their application looked at.

This government wants to mark International Women's Day. Great! However, the government is hiding the plight of many women and the fact that it is not giving them any chance to improve their lot. Women must always fight to be treated with fairness and ensure that the organizations which represent them get meagre financial support. By the way, these organizations face new financial constraints, with government cuts of close to \$1.5 million directly affecting them. How will they survive? The government could not care less.

I should point out here the courage and the determination displayed by women's organizations in their daily struggle. We have to constantly urge this government to act rather than to make nice speeches, or at least to act according to its rhetoric. This government proclaims to be an international leader in the promotion of equality for women, but it should first ensure that Canadian women are not victims of backward measures because of its own decisions. This government seems to deny women's reality and we wonder about its strategy to ensure that women have better working conditions and can make gains in the workplace?

Some positive measures are needed, including job-creation programs designed for all Canadians, not just 48 per cent of them, such as the totally inadequate infrastructure program.

[English]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak on International Women's Day. As the secretary of state mentioned in her remarks, this day was designated in honour of early campaigns to improve working conditions for women. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of some of these women.

• (1250)

In December 1993 the Manitoba legislature granted Dr. Charlotte Ross a licence to practise medicine. What makes this event unusual is that Dr. Ross obtained her medical degree 118 years earlier. Charlotte Whitehead Ross has links to this House. Her father, Joseph Whitehead, was the member of Parliament for the constituency of Huron North in the Confederation Parliament of 1867.

After being refused entry to any medical school in Canada because she was a female, Charlotte Ross obtained her medical degree in Pennsylvania in 1875. She practised medicine in Quebec for five years and then in Whitemouth, Manitoba, for another 32 years. She was the first female physician in both provinces.

The Manitoba legislature denied a request to license her in 1887 but she continued to practise unlicensed until 1912, four years before her death. She was a true female pioneer, a woman who was forced to confront state sponsored chauvinism with no employment equity or human rights legislation to protect her. In the proud tradition of western pioneers, Dr. Ross did what so many other prairie settlers did when confronted by arcane government regulations, she ignored them. Charlotte Ross' defiance undoubtedly helped make it easier for other women to follow in her footsteps.

In marking International Women's Day I am extremely proud to acknowledge the accomplishments of my great-grandmother.

Another woman who deserves recognition for her contributions in pioneering a role for women in the workforce is a constituent of mine, a friend and a mentor, Mrs. Ivy Pat Dillon. Prior to World War II at a time when the only job most women could get was as a secretary or a clerk, Mrs. Dillon worked as a manager for a company in the fledgling aerospace industry. She did not get there because of any affirmative action program or government initiative. Pat Dillon was a success because of her talents and her abilities.

Many other women of that era had to leave promising careers because they were expected to leave the workforce when they got married and raise a family. My mother was one of those women. She chose to give up a nursing career to raise a family of nine children. While she may not have climbed the corporate ladder, she made an enormous impact on her family, friends and community in many ways as a wife, a mother and a volunteer worker.

These women all overcame the challenges of a society that was very different from today's. Was it discriminatory? Without question, but societies evolve. It is just that some things take longer than others.

The greatest single factor in changing men's attitudes about equality in the workplace is not legislation. Rather, it is the fact that women have shown that they can compete with men on equal footing.

As a female baby boomer I have experienced amazing changes in the attitudes of both men and women toward the concept of equality. My working career has taken me from a clerk typist earning \$210 a month to being an owner-operator of a small business, to a senior government administrator, to a self-employed realtor and finally, to a parliamentarian. During my career I have faced a wide variety of attitudes from males and females.

In her speech the secretary of state commented on the fact that women entrepreneurs experience difficulty getting financing. I can attest to that personally. When I approached a bank in 1980 to get financing to expand my business, I was shocked to learn that it wanted my husband to co-sign for the loan. This was required despite the fact that my husband had nothing to do with