

Status of Women

we making of advisory councils? What are we doing by this debate today? What we are doing is fettering them. They will no longer want to speak to a minister in case what they tell him comes to the floor of the House, which is exactly what happens. On the other hand, we are fettering the minister who could be terrified of speaking to any advisory council, again in case it comes to the floor of the House. Will all this increase the status of the advisory council? Nonsense. The debate today has turned that advisory council, which could have been, and has been in the past, a very fine instrument, into a pitiful bunch of disappointed women. That is what has been achieved by the debate today. This debate has not helped by one iota the women of Canada, and at that I am incensed, I am angered and I am tremendously saddened. The women of Canada do need help, perhaps not the ones who complain because they are not a Mrs; they are probably a Miss, but they do not want to be known as such so they call themselves Ms. I will defend their right to call themselves whatever they like, even if they object to being called ladies. But, Mr. Speaker, they do not have the right to speak for the millions of other Canadian women who feel, as I do, that there are genuine problems which can be addressed and catered for by this particular minister who, as well as being in charge of the status of women is in charge of employment and immigration.

I will tell you about some of the problems I am talking about. I am talking in particular about the problems of the unwed mother.

An hon. Member: Oh, now we get it.

Mrs. Appolloni: Now you are getting it! The opposition whip will now get it. He will get an earful because I know what I am talking about, and this is not empty rhetoric. At least half the Advisory Council on the Status of Women will have a very simple and quick solution to the problem of these women, which is to get them abortions. I have been through that. I do not think they should have abortions. I think they have the right to have their children. But I do think it is society's responsibility to help a woman not only to bring a new Canadian citizen into the world but to make sure that he or she is treated equally to any other baby, wanted or unwanted, in Canada.

And now I come to the minister in charge of the status of women who is also in charge of employment and immigration. Because of the kinds of things that women like me speak to him about, the kinds of problems he works on are such things as training programs for these women. I wonder if any members in the opposition who have entered into the debate today have gone to places like the ones I have gone to in Toronto?

An hon. Member: They would not let me in.

Mrs. Appolloni: Mr. Speaker, the temptation is great, but I shall refrain from personal comments. As I was saying, these training schools in Toronto are funded by the minister's department. In them they teach the girls skills which, in ordinary circumstances, would be marketable skills. But the minute they leave that course after graduating, the minute

they have learned that skill which is necessary for them and for their children so that they can earn their daily bread, what happens? They have problems with child care. There are no day care centres, and they have problems if, God forbid, the child becomes sick. Who pays for the medicine then? Ordinarily, the Department of National Health and Welfare would, but because these women have been on the training course, they are on welfare. They should be able to earn their own money. What do they earn? They earn the bare minimum. I defy any member of the House to tell me how a woman can raise a child today on the minimum wage. I say this, leaving partisan politics aside. I say that it cannot be done. So what happens? They are cut off from welfare because they have been on our training program. But there is a hiatus between the time they are on the training program and the time they start earning just enough to keep themselves and their children. They have lost welfare payments and they are encouraged to go back to work, not for a few weeks but forever.

These are the kinds of programs we have to address, the problems about which the minister has already spoken. There is the problem of sexual assault. What does sexual assault mean, apart from the rhetoric? I will tell you what it means. It means the violation of a woman's body, the most horrendous crime on our books. It means putting out your hand to that woman and helping her to retrieve her own self-respect and get rid of her tremendous fear of anyone who is male, be it her husband, her brother or her father, whom she has known for years. As sensitive as many male members may be to this subject, I honestly do not believe they understand the real meaning of this kind of crime. But I believe our minister understands this. By himself he will not be able to eradicate these horrors with which women are faced today in increasing numbers, nor will this cabinet nor future governments be able to do so because there will first have to be a tremendous change in the attitude of society. These changes will not come so long as the Canadian public just sits back and watches the debates, which they can do now because of television. What is the Canadian public worried about today? It is worried about the future of fuel supplies and about the cost of fuel. The Canadian public is worried about the children and whether they will find jobs in the future. The Canadian public wonders whether there will be a united Canada in ten years' time. On the international scene we know that entire populations are dying, not because of what a minister said to some female who resigned, but for lack of food. The Canadian public also knows that people in other countries of the world are imprisoned for exactly what the minister did; they expressed their views and they were imprisoned. The minister expressed his view and he is in a pillory today in the House of Commons.

• (2020)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Appolloni: I hear the defenders of women's rights applauding the act that he is in a pillory. What are they doing for women's rights? They put up speakers to say that the