

the family and in society according to their individual choice. Each individual should be encouraged to discover and fulfill his or her own unique potential and identity without the constraint of society's presumptions. Women must not be treated as members of a group on the basis of some assumed average characteristic if they are to be allowed to realize their own potential. More than a token gesture, more than just what is required by law, a whole change in attitude is needed if the barriers preventing them from participating and contributing to all aspects of human activity are to be removed.

The government has in recent years strived to create public awareness of the problems facing women today, has continuously advocated equal opportunity for women in all fields of life and has worked toward the elimination of discrimination as a prerequisite for the improvement of the status of women. Our efforts are beginning to bear fruit. During the past year increasing attention has been given to this question by the public.

Throughout this period I have had the privilege of being assigned the responsibility for co-ordinating government activity on the status of women. I have taken every opportunity offered me to bring the concerns of women to the attention of my colleagues and to interpret women's needs to them, and I have received their constructive co-operation in my task. One step forward of which I am justly proud is the establishment of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This council has, in its first year, made many valuable recommendations to the government and has become a focal point for the aspirations of women everywhere in Canada.

Despite our achievements to this point, however, we recognize that much more has to be done in the field of legislation as well as changing attitudes. Two recent decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada have made this abundantly clear. I refer of course to the Murdoch case and to the Lavell case.

In the former, the Murdoch case, a woman who had worked with her husband building up a substantial farming property from nothing was denied any interest in that property when she separated from him. All that she was able to obtain was maintenance payments of \$200 a month. The decision brought home to all of us the vulnerable position of women who spend all their lives doing what is expected of them as wives, tending to their husbands and children and maintaining their homes while their husbands produce an income. In the case of farm wives such as Mrs. Murdoch, the injustice of the situation is particularly apparent, since they usually contribute directly to the development of the farm.

In other cases, such as wives of wage-earners or businessmen, the wife's role may be less direct. But surely, however a couple has decided to divide the various duties and responsibilities of living between them, the time has come to recognize that both partners contribute in one way or another to the acquisition of their assets and, therefore, both should have an interest in those assets. While jurisdiction with respect to matrimonial property is, I think, largely with the provinces, we in the federal government are concerned and a study of this matter, particularly as it applies to distribution of assets following

The Address—Mr. Munro (Hamilton East)

divorce, has been undertaken by the Law Reform Commission.

The other Supreme Court decision, the Lavell case, has pointed out the limitations of the Canadian Bill of Rights in protecting women against discrimination. The government is determined to act to provide new protection. First, as mentioned in the throne speech, the legislation to be introduced creating a Federal Commission on Human Rights and Interest will include provisions to protect women from discriminatory practices. This will incorporate the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of age, sex and marital status in the field of employment, which I originally announced would be added to the Labour Code. Our purpose in putting the employment provisions in the human rights legislation is to avoid the duplication and confusion which would result if the various fields in which discrimination might exist—employment, services, and so on—were covered by different pieces of legislation administered by different bodies.

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Our second attack on discrimination will be through the amendment of existing legislation to provide equal treatment for men and women. The Speech from the Throne referred to the Canada and Quebec pension plans and the agreement reached with provincial governments to amend the legislation in this respect. Presently, as hon. members know, these pension plans require everyone to contribute on the same basis but contain differing provisions with respect to benefits payable to the survivors of male and female contributors.

Another act which has received a great deal of attention is the Canadian Citizenship Act. My colleague the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) will be introducing legislation to amend this act so that among other things men and women will be given equal status.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): In addition, an omnibus bill on the status of women will be placed before the House with the object of removing from a number of other acts provisions which are presently discriminatory, or otherwise prejudicial to women. Examples of these acts include the Canada Elections Act, its provisions with respect to the listing of electors; the Immigration Act, particularly its reference to "head of family" and the acts relating to pensions and allowances for veterans. Changes will be proposed in these and other measures.

I turn now to the position of women who are public employees. The President of Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) will be proposing amendment to the Public Service Superannuation Act and related acts to provide for equal treatment of men and women in pension plans.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): The Treasury Board already has a program under which to review all regulations, directives and other regulatory measures with a view to removing inequities in them based on sex.

Mr. Stanfield: What about rug ranking?