

Status of Women

previous speaker, to see the minister continue in either of these capacities.

There is no question in the minds of all of us on this side of the House, and I should think in the minds of a great many on the other side, including the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) from what he said yesterday, that Doris Anderson was a particularly strong, effective, challenging president of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I think we can all agree to that. Perhaps she was a bit too independent, too strong, and perhaps too challenging. But she brought a degree of confidence to the operations of that council—and I have been watching it, as many of us have for years—not seen since its early years under Katie Cooke.

When the minister says, as he did yesterday, that the council should be congratulated for the work it has done on the recommendations it made to the constitutional committee, he should realize that what has made the council so effective in those recommendations has been the leadership provided by the president of that council. Enormous staff work has been done by the administration which she built up, because she is a good administrator. This too is evidenced by the quality of the research she had prepared by absolutely first-class women constitutional lawyers preparing the recommendations for the constitutional committee. Therefore it is a tragedy that it is she who has resigned and not the minister.

I think there is no question in anyone's mind, despite everything the minister has said to deny it, that the minister did make it very clear indeed that he would prefer not to have the postponed constitutional conference held in mid-February. It may be the council members dropped too quickly, like dominoes, at least 17 of them did, and I admire the ten who did not. It may be that they were too influenced because they are close friends or former campaign workers of the minister. It may be that they acceded to his request, acceded to his wishes—let me put it as wishes—too quickly. But from all of the evidence we have now seen in the documentation which is available to everyone, the minister was determined that the conference should not be held, and he was able to bring 17 members of that council into line.

On television last night we heard him say that he thought he had the support of the women of Canada in what he was doing. I wonder whether the minister has had an opportunity to read any of the letters or telegrams, or hear about the telephone calls which have come to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, some focusing on the importance of holding the conference as scheduled in February, many on the importance of the council's integrity and independence, and many covering both of those, as well as their support for the president of the council.

Does the minister know, when he says that he has the support of the women in Canada, who has been writing, phoning and sending telegrams? There have been well over a hundred who have done this and I would like to list some of them for the record. Groups as well as individuals have called in. Just a few are the Newfoundland Status of Women Council; the Canadian Federation of Business; the Canadian Con-

gress on Learning Opportunities for Women, Women for Political Action—the National Action Committee has already been mentioned—the Women's Research Centre in Vancouver; le Réseau d'Action et d'Informations pour les Femmes du Québec; the Nova Scotia Association of Women and the Law; the Voice of Women; the Coalition of Women's Groups; the Social Issues Committee of the YWCA; the National Association of Women and the Law; the Ontario Status of Women Council; the P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women; the Organization of Working Women; the Elizabeth Fry Society of Kingston, and the National Board of Directors YMCA of Canada, and so on.

Mr. Nielsen: The YMCA and the YWCA?

Miss Jewett: Both the YMCA and the YWCA, yes.

These are just a few of the organizations that have written to support the holding of this conference, which the minister was determined to have cancelled and in which he has succeeded, that wrote to support the integrity of the council from that kind of political interference, and that wrote to support Doris Anderson as the strongest president of the council there has ever been.

This raises the question of whether a council, whose members have a political loyalty to the minister, can survive. I do not think the present council can because of what has happened. But I have every wish, as I am sure we all do, that there be an advisory council. We will perhaps have to change its name. We do not want to see the minister enfold it into his department, which I sometimes think is what he has in mind. I think what he would really like is to have everything relating to women, women's programs in the Secretary of State's department, the women's bureau in the Department of Labour, but above all, the advisory council itself, to be part of his department. He does not want them out there talking. He does not want them criticizing government policy. He does not want them giving suggestions to the government, even good suggestions, as on the constitutional proposals. Therefore, it is all the more urgent, if that is in his mind, for us all to find ways and means of strengthening the council. Surely one of the most important ways is to get away from patronage appointments.

It is really shocking that over the years the council has been, in most instances, filled with people who are there because they have worked hard for the party in power, or because they have been campaign organizers, or because they deserve some small reward. They may be excellent women, many of them are. But unfortunately their first loyalty, given the way they are appointed, or the criteria of their appointment, is to the party.

● (1620)

What we should have, and many of these women might qualify on other grounds, is a council structure which will ensure that the membership of the council is not appointed just because of their political affiliation, but because of their involvement, interest in and concern for women's issues. They