

Social Security

would feel that they could not enter the work force, and more and more women want to do that. They do not want any restrictions on them. We all hear very strong representations in this field, and many hon. members brought forward this very argument yesterday.

The report goes on:

—the energies of those with an honest interest in establishing sex equality may simply be diverted by this argument and should be directed to more meaningful reform.

I think this brings us to a discussion of reform which should be brought forward to allow families to redistribute incomes between husbands and wives. We in this House all remember the Murdoch case in my own province of Alberta. In a divorce settlement a woman who had worked on the family ranch, raised the family and participated in the running of the ranch, was unable to realize anything for her labour. There is a definite need for Parliament to deal with that kind of thing. The province of Manitoba and many of the other provinces have contemplated this matter but have not been able to come to grips with it. It is something with which we as parliamentarians should be dealing, and it is of major significance.

I realize that the matter of the opportunity for women to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan while being married was brought forward in an amendment last year. This is something with which we must deal. We must deal with changes in the family allowance, the child tax credit plan, and day care facilities. I spoke with an hon. member about this motion today, and he suggested that perhaps the government should amend the tax law—I know the hon. member raised this matter in his speech—to allow the sole earner in the family to divide his income. If he makes \$20,000 and his wife contributes by raising the family, perhaps \$10,000 could be her share of the income and \$10,000 his share. By doing that they would pay less tax. The wife would be able to contribute to pension plans so that as she grows older she has some security.

As has been mentioned over and over again in debates—and I am not sure why this is—women tend to outlive men. At the far end of the scale many women are in the poorest categories because they have not been able to set aside any income for private pensions for their golden years. We as members of Parliament should debate this and examine whether there is room for legislation to deal with it.

This brings me to the matter of the government's looking seriously at making it possible for housewives and, more important, for women generally to plan for their old age. Wives who stay at home are often completely financially dependent on their husbands. However, only in the province of Manitoba are husbands not obligated to give any money at all to their wives upon separation. Many men are finding it increasingly difficult to manage on one salary. Because of this, in families where husbands earn low wages it is important that their wives work to keep their families above the poverty level. I point out that 51 per cent more two-spouse families would be poor if wives did not work outside their homes. In other words, wives are no longer working for pin money. They are con-

tributing actively to the maintenance of their families. Because of that I think the government is obligated to help those women find roles in the labour force, particularly women from single parent families, as I mentioned before.

The increasing participation of women in the labour force is no longer regarded as a temporary phenomenon. Increasingly women who participate in the labour force are mothers of pre-school children, and the overwhelming evidence is that mothers enter the work force either as sole providers for their families or because one salary is insufficient to meet the rising cost of living.

This brings me back to the need for the government to look at such things as day care to facilitate the participation of women in the work force. The government should examine information and referral services to facilitate the access of women to community services. Perhaps there should be a crisis intervention service so that women who are victims of certain crises can be sheltered temporarily, and so that their children can be cared for. Perhaps there should be home support services for women whose family responsibilities include the care of the disabled, such as a disabled husband, a disabled child or elderly family members.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) has stated over and over again that this government is devoted and will be devoting considerable attention to the development of an employment strategy for women. That brings me to the point of why I have difficulty supporting this motion. I fully believe that there are many pursuits into which the government can put its financial resources in order to work toward bettering opportunities for women in this country. I would like to see us develop such a process in the programs I mentioned, rather than put aside a great deal of money for financial contributions by way of salary.

With that, I will let other hon. members contribute to this debate, and I will be very interested in the points they bring forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I did not want to interrupt the member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) during his intervention. I listened carefully to what he said and he referred at one time to things I did not say. When he said I had not mentioned the role of the woman in single parent families, I would have to say that it is obvious that when I referred to women who work at home it was an all-encompassing motion. I could not let these remarks go into the record uncorrected because there was here a case of misinterpretation, and the persons concerned could feel attacked or even neglected by me. That is the correction I wanted to make.

● (1740)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCain): I think the hon. member has raised an item which is more or less an item of