

*Supply**[Translation]*

I have here the French version of the report of the Abella Commission of Inquiry on Equality in Employment for women. Table No. 10 shows the income gap between men and women. As everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, women have always been paid a lot less than men. The table shows that the percentage of average income for women as compared with the income of men was only 60.5 per cent in 1971. Six years later, in 1977, the average income of women was 61.7 per cent of the average income of Canadian men, and four years later, in 1981, it was 63.5 per cent. In ten years, the average salary increase for Canadian women was only 3 per cent.

[English]

And here we are now in the 1980s and we still find women in this country earning only 63 per cent or 64 per cent of what men earn. So I think the basic issue before the House today is that of equality; equality between the sexes, equality in the workplace, equal pay for work of equal value, equality in pension plans, training plans and things of that sort.

Looking at the unemployment level in this country, we heard the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) boasting that the unemployment rate dropped a little bit last month. But the unemployment rate for women in this country has been higher than 11 per cent ever since the election of the Government across the way. It has never gone below 11 per cent in the seven or eight months the present Government has been in office, and I say it is really much, much too high. My concern is that, given the Budget which comes down in a couple of weeks' time, and this Government's cut-back on social services, it will be the women of Canada who will be hit the hardest.

A good example is British Columbia. The biggest reason for the increase last month in unemployment in British Columbia was that women were being laid off. In fact, in the last year, because of the restraint program of Premier Bennett in that particular province, the unemployment rate for women went up by 2 per cent, while at the same time it dropped by 2 per cent for men in that province.

● (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the status of Canadian women is an issue with a number of very significant aspects. This afternoon I would like to speak briefly about the matter of training and the need to spend more money in this country on federal programs for Canadian women.

Second, I want to mention as well the important question of part time work. Mr. Speaker, 73 per cent of part time workers in Canada are women. Right now we are witnessing a serious labour conflict at Air Canada, and there is also the strike against Eaton's which began shortly before Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, I am seriously concerned because I think I detect a new economic trend in this country: part time work is

on the increase and there are fewer full time jobs for Canadian men and women.

Third, Mr. Speaker, there is also the problem of homemakers, because there are still many Canadian women who stay at home to raise their children, and of women who work on the farm with their husband, and there is much discrimination against these women.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the matter of women working in small businesses. They are subjected to discrimination, they have no pension and they are not entitled to investment credit and such things without the signature of their husband.

Besides, there is a group which is almost forgotten in our country, Mr. Speaker, and that is the group of women between 60 and 64 of age. It is the group of Canadian women which is most often overlooked by the Parliament of Canada as well as by Canadian legislators in all provinces.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about social programs. As I said in the House this afternoon when I directed a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald), I am concerned about the future of social programs in Canada. Just before Christmas, we held in this House a debate on family allowances, on other social programs, on the future of medicare in Canada and all other similar programs affecting women more than men.

[English]

In many ways, Mr. Speaker, it all comes back to the question of employment. It comes back to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and to recommendations made in this report by Judge Abella for employment equity and affirmative action. It comes back to Parliament having the courage to legislate in this country affirmative action in the private sector and through contract compliance with companies that do business with the federal Government in the amount of billions of dollars each and every year. I do not think we have done enough in terms of forcing the Government and the private sector to implement legislation to provide equal pay for work of equal value. We must move now and move quickly if we are to have equality.

Let us look at the Government's record. Today the Minister spoke about women and jobs for them. Only 5 per cent of the money which has been set aside for employment-creating projects has been specifically earmarked for young people and women in Canada. About 42 per cent of women are now in the workforce. Yet we do not have a commitment, even in the Canada Employment and Immigration centres, to ensure that at least 45 per cent of the people placed in jobs are women. When we got the figures from the Minister just before Christmas, we saw that the number of women placed in jobs in the country was well under 42 per cent.

We must move quickly to ensure parity in this very important area. We need affirmative action as well as specific goals and targets. In two or three places in her report Judge Abella told us clearly that we will not have affirmative action or resolution of the problem of lack of equality unless we have