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WOMEN UNDEREMPLOYED AND UNDERPAID

The following is a recent address by Miss Sylva M. Gelber, Director, Women's Bureau, Canada Department of Labour, to the Pioneer Women of Canada, Montreal:

There are today in Canada nearly three-quarters of a million (678,035) working women who have over one and one-third million (1,350,000) children under the age of 14. They are the wives of men whose families consist of one or more children under 14, and who have a median income of less than \$6,454 a year. Or they are women without husbands, as in the case of some 60,000 of them.

There are also today in Canada about one-third of a million women who are the sole support of families; the vast majority (206,117) are widows. Consider with these, almost a million single working women, and it may be fair to assume that the vast majority of women, particularly married women with young children who double their own burden by going out to work, are employed because of economic need.

The increasing participation of women in the labour force is a fact of life not only in Canada but in most industrialized societies today. International statistical comparisons of the size of the labour force, of course, may be somewhat misleading, particularly with regard to the developing countries, where definitions appear to be interpreted rather

freely. However, some comparison in relation to developed countries may be meaningful. In many Western European countries, the percentage of women in the labour force is greater than it is in this country.

WOMEN ABROAD

Sweden and France, West Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as the United States of America, all report greater participation of women in the labour force than there is in Canada. This may be due in some part to the availability in other countries of facilities, such as day-care centres, for those working women who have preschool-age children. Be that as it may, the increasing numbers of women entering the labour force abroad appears to be continuing.

In Canada, the percentage of women in the labour force has increased from about one-quarter (25.8 per cent) of the total ten years ago to nearly one-third (32.1 per cent) today. At the same time, the participation-rate of women, that is the percentage of all women of working age who are working outside of the home, also rose from more than a quarter (27.9 per cent) in 1960 to well over a third (35.5 per cent) in 1970. In other words, at least every third woman in Canada of working age is in the labour force.

There are today about one million more working women in this country than there were ten years ago. The most recent figure shows a total of over 2.9 million women who are working. Furthermore, the largest influx of any group into the labour force in recent years has been that of women, and particularly women just beyond the current average childbearing years.

MARITAL STATUS

The marital-status pattern of working women also appears to be undergoing change. Last year, less than half (47.5 per cent) of the female labour force

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