

Status of Women

will check the evidence, he will find that he is not correct. I hope that he is not wilfully misleading this House.

Mr. Symes: It would be interesting to see the list, because some of them have only been partially implemented. I am talking about those which have been fully implemented. If I am in error, I stand corrected. I wish the minister would give the exact figure. The basic point is there were 122 recommendations and this government is far short of implementing them.

The roles for women in our society today are narrow, restricted and often onerous. There is still too much stereotyping, stating that the woman's place is in the home. Certainly, many women—perhaps the majority—feel that being a homemaker is a very rewarding and fulfilling experience. I have no quarrel with that whatsoever. However, if this is to be a just society with equal opportunity, an option should be open to women who do not want to conform to the role of homemaker. That option should be open to them without discrimination or impediment.

We find that many women in the home have the problem of being isolated from each other and from society at large. They often have to experience life through the achievements of their husbands and children. Many women I have talked to feel trapped in the home situation. Although it is rewarding for them to raise their children and prepare them for adulthood, many find it frustrating and inhibiting. They feel their creativity can only be channelled in a family direction rather than being free to pursue interests outside the family such as employment or further education.

Women in the home who would like to take courses or work part time are frustrated by the lack of child-care facilities in this country. What we have in child day-care centres today meets only 1 per cent of the need in this country. Because of inflation, many women who would like to stay at home and be with their children are forced to find work to supplement the family income so that their children may have a decent standard of living. For them, the lack as well as the expense of day-care facilities defeats the whole purpose of supplementing the family income.

Another situation of which we must remind ourselves is the degree of poverty that women face. Most women work in the home with no pay and no pension. The frightening fact is that in this country 60 per cent of those on welfare are women. Female heads of families are five times more likely to be living below the poverty line than male heads of families. Indeed, 40 per cent of women who head families in this country live in poverty.

This sad fact rests with this government's lack of initiative to bring in a guaranteed annual income and to provide adequate public housing at a cost these people can afford. It is not the fault of many single-parent families, especially those headed by women, that they are in this situation today. This government, through its inability to work out a guaranteed income scheme with the provinces, puts women and their families in an intolerable position. I see this whenever I am in my constituency and have appointments with my constituents. I can relate case after case of women who are experiencing abject poverty and extreme

[Mr. Lalonde.]

social and psychological stress because of the discrimination of legislation at the federal and provincial levels and because of the lack of policy in the social welfare field to alleviate these conditions.

● (1630)

What do you say to a separated wife who has a two-year old child to support, who is living in an upstairs apartment with no water facilities and has to carry water up in a bucket from downstairs. According to the regulations and laws governing payment of social benefits, she cannot move out of her apartment because she cannot afford any other situation. What do you say to her when she says, "I want to do something for my child. I want to raise him in an adequate home environment so that he will not become a delinquent or fall into the kind of poverty I see around me"? Or when she asks, "What am I supposed to do—go out and walk the streets to supplement my income?" We do not have answers because of the government's failure to implement programs along the lines I have described.

I could go on and on mentioning case after case of unmarried women who have decided to support their children, and the kind of difficulties they face. One woman desperately wants to work but cannot find day-care facilities for her child. These are the problems of poverty which face hundreds of thousands of women.

In addition, women face severe job discrimination. One-third of Canada's labour force is female and one-third of all married women work away from home. If we look at women's wages, we find they are significantly less than men's. When we examine people in managerial occupations, we find that the wages of men exceed the average wages of women by 107 per cent. If we examine clerical occupations, we find that on an average men's wages exceed those paid to women by 56 per cent. In the service industries the male wage exceeds that of the female by 112 per cent, in sales occupations by 167 per cent, and in professional and technical occupations by 66 per cent.

This discrimination exists in Canada today despite all the promised legislation and existing legislation. The inevitable conclusion is that the laws are not working to end discrimination in pay rates. Nor does it help if women get a higher degree of education. Studies have shown that men with no education receive wages which are 84.5 per cent higher than wages paid to women with no education. But suppose a man and a woman hold equivalent university degrees: the man receives 84.4 per cent more than the woman who is similarly qualified. From a survey of 74 occupations from 1969 to 1972, we find that the gap between men's wages and women's wages widened in 37 of those occupations; that is, in half of them.

It must be conceded that the government has failed to end discrimination in this field and that the situation is getting no better. Women have become a reserve pool of cheap labour and they are the least secure of all those in the labour force since they are most affected by lay-offs. Many employers use the existence of cheap female labour to blackmail male employees into accepting lower wages. Wage discrimination cannot help but promote hostility between men and women in the work force. Can you imagine the attitude of a man and a woman working side by side as senior accounting clerks when the woman,