

situation with respect to the employment of women in the public service.

Since that time there has been opportunity in the House, and to some degree outside the House, to deal with this issue. To date there has been no adequate explanation or justification for the type of press release which was issued by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) on March 2. In response to this report, he said that in fact substantial progress had been made by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission in improving representations of women at all levels within the commission.

Subsequently on March 8, when I questioned the minister on this release, he indicated that in particular this press release was put forward to justify the situation with respect to the employment of women at the SX level. I cannot understand why the Minister of Employment and Immigration would want to take credit for the present situation concerning the employment of women, either at the SX level or at other levels, with respect to that particular commission. It is useful to remind ourselves that in terms of the over-all ratio of employees in the Department of Employment and Immigration at the present time, it is something like 54.7 women to 45.3 men. In other words, the breakdown would be 12,735 women and 10,531 men. On a total basis, that means that more than half of the employees which make up this particular department are women.

When one looks at the SX level, we find the figures from the latest report of the Public Service Commission. In table 19 at page 75, it is indicated that there are 89 employees at the SX level. Of that number, realizing that more than one half of the department is staffed by women, how many women are occupying positions at the SX level? I suggest there are three. I understand, and I have not had a chance to check this, that perhaps a few years ago there were only one or two, so there has been an increase over the past few years of perhaps one or two women at the SX level. Somehow or other the minister interprets this, by way of a press release, to indicate that substantial progress has taken place. The minister must be living in some kind of dream world to believe that represents in anybody's books substantial progress.

● (2302)

In the press release, which I do not have time to review in detail here, he makes other interesting statements or affirmations which I hope will be cleared up this evening, a couple of which I put on the record at the time I questioned the minister on March 8.

For instance, he said in terms of acting appointments that 44 of these acting appointments were female administrative support employees acting in officer positions. On March 8 I asked the minister just how many of those were subsequently confirmed, and he indicated, I think, in his answer that he would give me greater detail. I also asked him, in view of the fact that he put on the record the improvement that had taken place in the CR-5 group, what had been the experience with CR-6 and CR-7. When it came to the categories of adminis-

Adjournment Debate

trative and foreign service, the PM and AS levels, here we see a situation in respect of the PM classification in the department where, although progress has taken place over the last three to five years, the progress has been so slow it would take well over one quarter, if not a half a century to achieve some kind of acceptable level of equilibrium within that particular classification. In the case of administrative support we see a situation where there has actually been a decline in three separate categories.

I think it is high time that the minister of this particular department, as well as ministers of every other department in the public service who claim to have some plan of action, some program of equal opportunity or affirmative action, give a clear accounting to this House and the people of Canada of what has been happening to women in the public service.

If we look at the most recent report of the Public Service Commission, we see there are a number of areas in the report that really are quite disturbing. I just want to point to one which is perhaps as disturbing as any in this report, to be found at page 135, which indicates that in the scientific and professional group, in terms of the separation that has taken place by category and sex, that of the numbers that have been laid off some 81 per cent have been women. There has been, of course, a noticeable decline in the employment of women in that particular classification.

There is little to cheer about in the latest report of the Public Service Commission in terms of improvement or hope for improvement in the employment of women. I hope the parliamentary secretary tonight will shed a bit of light on what effective action has been taken by the Department of Employment and Immigration to give a little leadership to a government that really seems to have lost any sense of responsibility in respect of redressing the imbalance injustice that exists for women in the public service.

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I should like to commend the hon. member opposite for raising this question, but I think that perhaps he is being a little harsh. I say this as someone who has been associated with the status of women for a long time. Progress is slow, sometimes irritatingly slow, but I think the government of Canada has given quite reasonable leadership in the field.

If I understood the hon. member correctly, some of his criticism was directed to the presence or absence of full time equal opportunity for women co-ordinators in the public service. I can understand his laying emphasis on this because, as one looks at the progress in different departments, there does seem to be a correlation of departments that had an EOW co-ordinator with more solid progress than those that have not. I am not sure that anyone could have anticipated this, but now that it is happening I think it is an important finding.

The figures are somewhat better for the EOW co-ordinators in place than it appears, if one only looks at the full time positions. The 1972 cabinet directive which established equal opportunity policies in departments of the government did not