

*Adjournment Debate*

STATUS OF WOMEN—REFUSAL TO MEET WITH  
NAC—REDUCED FUNDING TO WOMEN'S  
GROUPS/RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT OF PC WOMEN'S  
FEDERATION

**Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax):** Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to a question I asked on May 15 last, regarding the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and the Government's decision not to attend that lobby. When the Hon. Minister destroyed a 15 year tradition of the Government attending the NAC lobby, she denied a huge constituency of Canadian women the opportunity to question Cabinet Ministers openly in the presence of the media. She denied this constituency which represents women of all backgrounds their right to hear just what the Government intends to do to fulfil its promises to Canadian women.

• (1800)

These women had a right to hear from the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Beatty) why there is no national child care program after the promises made. They had a right to hear from the Minister responsible for the status of women why contract compliance in the area of pay equity is a joke. They had a right to ask the same Minister, in her role as the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mrs. McDougall) to know why women, the last hired and the first fired, will find it more and more difficult to qualify for UI benefits.

I understand why the Government cancelled that lobby. It is neither easy nor pleasant to spend an hour in that lobby for any Canadian politician. However, I can assure the Government that life today for the vast majority of Canadian women is neither pleasant nor easy. There is a frustration in the ranks of women activists that has been aggravated by years of empty promises, inadequate programs, and the patriarchal, patronizing poses of the Government. There is a frustration in the ranks of all Canadian women as to when the Government will begin to take those problems seriously.

The Minister and her Government have exploited the difficulties that the National Action Committee has undergone in the past year. As with any umbrella organization, there are naturally strongly held and divergent views on a number of issues. There are also varying and different styles of lobbying. Some of those styles are more abrasive than others. Again, the fact that some

Canadian women live lives of quiet desperation creates a certain abrasion in manner.

While I understand the Government's reluctance to attend on that lobby, I can hardly credit that a desire not to be insulted would lead it to break such a long tradition. No, the real reason behind this abdication is that the Government has no commitment to gender equality, no commitment to child care, no commitment to contract compliance in the area of pay equity. In short, it has no commitment to the millions of Canadian women who suffer under the inequities of systemic discrimination in Canadian society.

NAC is not a perfect organization. Perfect organizations are hard to come by. Neither, by any stretch of the imagination, is this a perfect Government, certainly not in the eyes of Canadian women. Nor is it a fair Government. Indeed, it is a Government that is too callous even to spare an hour for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women; it is too uncaring to provide child care spaces for one million latchkey kids; it is too cavalier about its responsibility to equality to continue to fund adequately a national umbrella group that strives to attain goals to which the vast majority of women adhere and for which the vast majority of Canadian women yearn.

I remind the Government that attacks on the National Action Committee may cripple that organization, but it will not cripple the millions of Canadian women who will continue to demand equality and to demand of the Government a fair deal. I remind government Members of this, and I suggest that they act soon to redress those inequities. If they do not, the outcries and the protests will overflow this Hill. They will certainly overflow Room 200 in the West Block, and there will be no place for the Ministers and the Government to hide.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to respond to the question put by the Hon. Member for Halifax (Ms. Clancy) to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women on May 15, 1989.

Mr. Speaker, in her preamble the Hon. Member said that the Minister had refused to meet the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. That is not altogether true. The Minister privately met with the