

*Supply*

women's organizations was commonly recognized. It is not easy to answer to one's conscience when the will to act is lacking.

It would seem that the activities of this organization will be transferred to Status of Women Canada. What activities are we talking about, however, since \$1 million in funding will be cut?

• (1620)

The equal opportunities for women program will also be transferred to Status of Women Canada, but with a budget reduced by five per cent. They say that, for the moment, this cut will not affect grants to volunteer organizations working on the status of women issue. What we really want to know is how long will this moment last.

Of all of the issues regarding the status of women, violence against women is probably the most devastating, as much physically as it is psychologically and it also saps morale. Despite the efforts of groups working to stop violence against women, the incidence of violence has increased at an alarming rate. Can we fight so rampant a social ill with only sentiment and good intentions as weapons? No, Madam Speaker.

The violence that often stems from economic inequality could be eliminated if the government would only assume a strong leadership role in society, put equality high on the list of priorities and channel the appropriate resources to the cause. Governments do not have the right to expose the pursuit of economic equality for women to the whims of the tax system and budgets. Such behaviour is tantamount to subsidizing economic inequality.

More than ever, fighting violence against women must be a priority. Is it acceptable in 1995 that women and families still have to face violence day after day? In January 1994, Statistics Canada publicized the results of a vast survey in which 12,300 women participated. It brought to bear some disquieting facts.

It revealed that 51 per cent of all women have been victims of at least one act of physical or sexual violence. One in five were hurt and one in four were hurt so badly that they required medical attention. In 25 per cent of all cases, the husband or common-law spouse was the perpetrator. What is even more serious is that children witnessed the violence 4 times out of 10.

These figures jive, by the way, with the statistical data contained in a 1991 report called "The War Against Women". The report found that between 63 and 83 per cent of the victims of physical abuse knew the men who abused them. One woman in ten is assaulted by her spouse and, on the average, victims are abused 30 times before they call the police.

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women published its own figures, which have quite a story to tell about the treatment women receive. It found that one in four Canadian women were sexually exploited at one point of their lives. In half of the cases, these women were not even 17.

Considering these disturbing facts, how can the government justify its decision to reduce subsidies to organizations against violence towards women when the need is more pressing?

Women will not feel secure before there is true equality between men and women. How much injustice, inequity, inequality, and violence will the women of Canada and Quebec have to endure before the government commits itself to act in a concrete way and proceed with the necessary social and economic changes to achieve equality?

The Liberal government with its current budgetary measures in the area of unemployment insurance, with its determination to cut transfer payments to the provinces in the areas of health, education and social services is working towards a pull-out of the central government in these matters.

The so-called reform of social programs, postponed until 1997, announced a dark future for young people, the unemployed, senior citizens and, of course, women.

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Indeed, there is no doubt that women will be the first victims of the changes to eligibility criteria for unemployment insurance, in a large part because it will be based on family income. We can assume that women could be denied access to the plan because of the high salaries of their husbands. What about other payments, in particular old age security?

The same logic seems to apply, since the budget of the Minister of Finance is starting to open a breach into old age security. "If your family income exceeds a certain threshold, Madam, you will no longer get your monthly cheque." For many women, this cheque is tangible proof of a certain financial autonomy, very often the first they ever had. We cannot deny that some aspects of women's reality have been overlooked by decision-makers. But an oversight can be corrected, if only the will to be fair is strong enough for us to admit that we were wrong.

The economic security and equality of women can only be achieved if women are economically independent. In turn, economic independence is tied to the creation of lasting full time and adequately paid jobs. However, in 1993, women accounted for 69 per cent of part time workers in Canada. This ratio is unacceptable. Job insecurity is replacing economic security and equality for women. This is second rate equity.

Instead of jeopardizing the scant efforts made over the past decades to try to provide women in Canada and Quebec with economic equality, the government should recognize that only a