

● (1720)

[English]

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) has brought this motion before the House at least twice before that I know of, and I was here both times. He is so eloquent that he has almost convinced me I should support the motion. When he gets to the full height of his speaking abilities, there are not many in this chamber who can equal his good voice and debating abilities.

The hon. member stated we should recognize the contribution of women in the building and development of this country. I compliment him on bringing forward this subject. He fully believes we are not recognizing the work done by mothers in this country in the fashion it should be recognized. He has strong feelings about this legislation and about the hope that this legislation should come before the House and he brings it before us at every opportunity. Hon. members must recognize these strong feelings about a piece of legislation. Many times I have had strong feelings about various subjects and from time to time have received welcome support from other members in these areas.

The hon. member referred to certain problems that could result from this proposed legislation, such as the fact that it could cost an arm and a leg. However, he stated there are many programs put forward by government that cost a lot of money but seemingly are not in the best interests of the people of this nation and, if they were cancelled, the money could be made available for such a proposal. I believe that is true.

Many members of Parliament become very discouraged over the fact that this is so because they have programs they believe are good for their constituencies and for the nation, but there is never enough money for them because it is being spent in ways which they would rather defer. I realize that money could be found for these programs if we were to cancel some of those we do not think are of benefit. However, as we participate in this chamber we realize the government has priorities, that there is only so much money and it has to be put to the best use that can be found for it.

I find difficulty in supporting the motion at the present time and I wish to outline a few of the reasons why. It is becoming more and more difficult for families to make ends meet. In my riding of Wetaskiwin, for example, the average home costs in the neighbourhood of \$75,000 to \$90,000. Many of those in my riding are commuters. They must provide food and clothing for their families as well as education for their children. It is very difficult for them to make ends meet. I realize one way to help them would be by accepting the very motion the hon. member is presenting.

I again emphasize that I believe the hon. member is bringing this motion forward because the government is not recognizing mothers in the way we feel they should be recognized. We are always reviewing the subject of what value to put on labour. It is not only the mothers of this country who do not

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believe they are getting adequate recognition for their labour, but how do we as politicians or as a government decide what value to put on labour? This can be done in many ways and it is a question that should be debated in this House. I realize our time is short but it is a very important subject that should be dealt with by the members of this House.

Is the proper manner of recognizing the work of mothers to give them a salary paid, I suspect, by the taxpayers? That proposal is not outlined in the hon. member's motion, but as I listened to his speech I think he meant that it should be paid by the taxpayers.

I propose that our money be moved to some areas that are more essential, and I wish to outline those areas. During today's question period in the House, the hon. member for Saint-Léonard-Anjou (Miss Bégin) questioned the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Crombie). She stated that the bill discussed yesterday and given second reading did not go far enough and that the government should find \$320 million, I believe was the figure, to increase benefits for the needy between ages 60 and 65, regardless whether they are single or married. Of course, we would all like to do that. She mentioned, as did the hon. member for Bellechasse, that a program could be done away with in order to find the money.

There are many statistics to show that elderly women are the poorest people in this country. Those statistics were again referred to yesterday in this House, and I want to emphasize them again.

There are many in this House and, I am sure, across this nation who would object to the term "housewife". That leaves out a group of people who are very important and should be looked at. I refer to the single parent and the fact that many times a man is in that role. Many have a definite need to help support their family resulting from, say, a family tragedy. In our material society families are breaking up for various reasons. Perhaps the most tragic is the loss of a partner.

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Many single people are now demanding that they be allowed, through adoption, to have families as well. They are trying to remain in the labour force while supporting families. I do not think that we as members of this House of Commons should limit this motion just to the housewife. We should broaden the motion somewhat, if we contemplate passing it.

Many studies have been done on this very subject, and one to which I would like to make reference is the report of the Canadian Council on Social Development entitled "Women's Pension". I want to quote two of the early parts of this study to emphasize how this council felt. I believe this study was undertaken last year. One quotation is on page 126, and it deals with the concept and valuation of work. It states:

—the pay for housework proposal does nothing to solve the sexual division of labour inside and outside the home. Indeed, it may simply serve to make it more rigid and legitimize it.

After reading the rest of the report, I think what the council was saying was that if we have such a proposal as the one before us today, we would put women in a position where they