

*Status of Women Study*

referred at Toronto to some of the steps which have already been taken. He said:

In the short interval since the report was tabled, a number of steps have been taken to ensure informed and co-ordinated federal government action in response to it. Most important of those steps is the government's announced decision to give priority consideration to the recommendations.

We have already appointed within the Privy Council Office a highly qualified person whose responsibility it is to ensure informed and co-ordinated government action with respect to the report. An interdepartmental committee will examine those recommendations directed to the federal government. It is under instructions to complete its work as quickly as possible and to submit reports periodically to Cabinet.

The report calls for the appointment of a minister to deal with this issue. The Prime Minister, in his speech, said that a bureaucrat from the Privy Council Office had already been appointed to co-ordinate the program. Frankly, I prefer the approach suggested in the motion. I think that if we are going to focus attention on this priority and give it the kind of urgent action that is required, it is well for the public to have a minister looking after the matter rather than, as I say, some bureaucrat sitting in an office in Ottawa who is responsible for co-ordination. If we believe that politicians should assume the responsibility for policy decisions and policy implementation, it follows that there should be a minister at whom we can take shots if necessary when action is taken not in the way we think it should.

● (5:20 p.m.)

In this connection, the minister who spoke this afternoon hinted, in what perhaps was the major achievement of the debate, that there may well be a minister appointed one day soon to deal with this area of responsibility. I would very much welcome that development because it is one of the most worth-while features of the motion we are debating today.

I should like also to deal with the question of attitude. There has been a lot of discussion today about attitude toward equal rights for women as contrasted with the law and legal changes. We have been talking about changing attitudes and changing the law, and perhaps I could introduce this subject by taking a quotation from Doris Lessing, who said:

We have been given ample warning that the next ten or fifteen years will decide whether the human race can survive. Our survival is threatened by almost certain war, by famine, by contamination, by climatic change due to pollution. Perhaps the sex war could be postponed until more urgent issues are settled?

That kind of statement leads me to respond that I think there is a relationship between the priority we give to recognizing the contribution that women can make and the speed with which fundamental problems of our society will be solved. Discrimination of any kind is a luxury, a waste, something that Canadian society in particular cannot afford at this time. It is true that there are tremendous problems facing us. It is true that the world faces tremendous problems. But to relegate the problem of dealing with the inequality of women below other priorities denies to us the very important contribution that women can make to solving such problems. Attitude is a very important part of this question.

[Mr. Kaplan.]

The hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) was able to put before us a proud record of contributions made by his female ancestors to the establishment of women's rights in Canada, and I only wish I could respond with a list of contributions made by my own ancestors. However, I cannot do so. Perhaps they are more anonymous than his. But I can put forward in a personal vein, as he did, a story concerning one of my descendants which might make the point. I think that when you are a father and have, as I have, both a son and daughters, you can see in a very real way the way that social attitudes affect your own children.

Occasionally at weekends I work and do my reading and so on, in a very large office building in downtown Toronto. One day I took my daughter with me to help get her out of the house, and so I could spend some time with her. While I was on the telephone, and after I had been working for about two hours, she asked me whether there was a ladies washroom in the building. This is one of the largest office buildings in Toronto and I said: "Of course there is; there are many women working in this building". She replied: "Oh yes, the secretaries". She is a seven year old child who is just reaching the point where she is beginning to think about what kind of future there is for her. This is in marked contrast to my six year old son who sees the world opening up for him and offering opportunities that are virtually limitless. This story illustrates the tremendous disparity between aspirations and expectations which practically cripple many children from childhood.

The report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women deals with this point, and I should like to read this paragraph which indicates the price that we pay for the attitude of discrimination that we have. Paragraph 73 of the report on page 180 reads as follows:

While they are still in school, girls tend to have low occupational expectations, even when they express interest in more challenging fields. Responses to a recent survey based on a national sample showed, for example, that although only 18 per cent of fourth-year high school girls preferred sales and clerical careers, 32 per cent seemed to assume that they would eventually work in these fields.

In other words, given the attitudes of our society they would not achieve their aspirations.

According to the results of the survey, the careers boys want are closer to those they expect to have.

I do not think we can afford to perpetuate such a system, and for that reason if for no other, I think Canada has to change. We have to try to find ways of utilizing the goodwill, talent and enthusiasm that is just as much available from our girls and women as it is from our men.

A number of hon. members who have spoken today have contrasted changing the law with changing attitudes. The Prime Minister spoke about this and tended to regard the two as separate problems. The Prime Minister said:

Attitude has been the contributor of most of the obstacles which now confront women in Canada. But more than a change of attitude is required in order to overcome discrimination and