

*This article was written by Betsy Rothman, an American journalist and activist in the women's movement.*

parent to them and eventually to the government that neither Canada nor any other nation can ignore women. When half of a country's human resources are squandered it can only work against the national interest.

**The report mentions that women are afraid not to conform to the traditional subordinate role. Why do you think this happens?**

Dependency. Women are conditioned at a very early age to be submissive and dependent. Parents, schools, textbooks, law, the mass media — the whole tradition of our society reflects these attitudes. Why up until the middle of the last century married women could not manage their own property. We couldn't even keep the money we earned.

Parliament gave us the right to vote in 1920, which meant that women could be elected to the House of Commons and hold public office. In Canada Senators are appointed by the cabinet. When women's organizations asked the government to appoint women senators, the government doubted if women were eligible since under the British North America Act, the written part of Canada's constitution, only "persons" are eligible to sit in the upper house. The Supreme Court upheld that attitude, but the judicial committee of the Privy Council in London, then the final court of appeal, reversed the Supreme Court and in 1929 declared women were persons under the law. The first Senator was appointed in 1930.

**How are the schools responsible for much of this conformity?**

The whole system perpetuates the subordinate role. Many counsellors are part of the system which forces girls into traditional "female" occupations. Young girls are still taught to dream as unrealistically about marriage as girls were 40 years ago.

**Do you think girls would get a more positive self-image in sex-segregated schools?**

I feel this would be a retrograde step. Women are going to have to live with men all their lives, so they should be educated with men. But there has to be more emphasis in the schools on the art of family living — biologically and philosophically. This should begin in kindergarten. We have to move away from the unrealistic and destructive attitudes towards sex that are so much a part of western society. The schools are the place to begin.

**Did the commission uncover surprising facts — things the commissioners had not expected?**

Yes. What we discovered was that in order to understand the problems of women we had to

understand and investigate the problems of poverty — so many Canadian women are poor. The discrimination is overwhelming: women get paid less, they are relegated to low-level jobs, the burden and expense of child care falls on them and they can least afford to bear it. Our worst cases of poverty are to be found among Eskimo and Indian women. How can a poor woman compete for a job, even one of the low-level jobs available to women, if she lacks skill and training? A poor woman doesn't even have the opportunity to learn job skills.

The commissioners were deeply concerned by the large number of poor women, either deserted, divorced, or widowed, who are the sole-support parents of children. The commission is in favor of a guaranteed annual income based on the principle of negative income tax, but we recommended that the government immediately provide a guaranteed annual income for sole-support parents, 90 per cent of whom are women.

**You mentioned child care. This is a burning issue in the U.S. How is it handled in Canada?**

Day care was the subject we heard more about than any other. Canada desperately needs a network of day care centers and this was one of the commission's crucial recommendations. The responsibility for child care falls on the mother. In the commission's opinion, children are the responsibility of the mother, the *father*, and *society*. Currently neither Canada nor the United States has taken responsibility for their children.

**Could you explain the family allowance plan? The U.S. doesn't have this form of social security.**

Since 1944 we've had a family allowance in Canada: \$6 a month for a child under ten, \$8 each for children ten to 16, plus a \$300 and \$500 income tax deduction per child.

The commission recommended that a child care allowance of about \$500 a year for each child — about \$40 a month — be paid by the Federal Government to mothers. This would replace the existing family allowance and tax exemption. The commission believed that in an urbanized society all preschool children should have the advantages of day care centers, which would be paid for on a sliding scale. The allowances would enable working mothers to pay for day care and would compensate mothers who decide to stay home.

**Legalized prostitution is mentioned by some groups in the U.S. as a goal. What do you think of this for Canada?**

Prostitution is not illegal in Canada. What is illegal is being found in a bawdyhouse, soliciting, or vagrancy. Vagrancy is a problem for young people in Canada today because the police can stop you and make you give an account of your-

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