

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 11, 1982

The House met at 11 a.m.

• (1105)

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### STATUS OF WOMEN

#### INEQUALITY OF AVERAGE INCOMES—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of pressing urgency, under the provisions of Standing Order 43. Figures released this week by Statistics Canada show that the average income for women in 1980, the last year for which reports are available, was only half that earned by men. This situation is grossly unfair in a country which recently adopted a Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteeing equality for men and women. To ensure that women have equality in fact and not just in theory, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley):

That this House urge governments, business and labour unions to recognize that true equality for women will only come about when there is true equality in the workplace, and that immediate steps be taken to redress the inequity that presently exists where the average income of women is only half that of men.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for this motion?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Miss MacDonald:** Madam Speaker, the question of equality for women in this country is one which surely speaks to every Canadian who feels that all individuals in this country should have the opportunity to make full lives for themselves. They should have that opportunity whether they live in the eastern part of the country, the central part, the western part, the northern part, whether they be men or whether they be women. There should be equality for every person to carry out his or her full development. This equality does not exist at the present time for almost half the population. In 1980, the latest year for which we have statistics from Statistics Canada, the average income for women was only \$8,200 compared to \$16,700 for men. This inequity is something which all of us as legislators should work together to remove.

I urge upon all members of the House that they appeal to governments, to businesses, both large and small and to labour unions right across the country to tackle this situation as an immediate priority so that this inequity could be redressed, without saying redress is something that has to come about in 1990, or the year 2000, or some long way down the road. It should be an immediate priority now for a country which sees itself as civilized, humane, and enlightened.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)):** Madam Speaker, I agree completely with what the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) has said. But I would go even further and suggest that society's attitudes be examined in this country. We should look at our system of education and the way we treat each other as human beings.

I suggest that hon. members of this House take a good look at one of the most recent reports put out by the Science Council of Canada called "Who turns the wheel?" It takes a very close look at what is happening to women in this country, how they are educated and how their attitudes are shaped at a very early stage in life. Though the hon. member is quite right in saying that we must address the problems that exist in the workplace today, we must address our attitudes immediately to see that those attitudes are erased and changed so that we can look forward to a society in which men and women are indeed equal.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James):** Madam Speaker, clearly the fact that women earn only half of what men earn in our society is totally unacceptable. The fact that this condition continues shows the inadequacies of policies that have been used to attack this problem to date.

It is time now to look for some new and effective measures, including the use of contract compliance and mandatory affirmative action.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Madam Speaker:** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to.