

Oral Questions

I urge the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) to use his influence with the CPR to see that it makes the same kind of agreement with its employees.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**REPORTED SUBMISSION TO EQUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE**

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Justice I will direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. I have a copy of the intended submission of the Department of National Defence to the Justice subcommittee on Charter equality. It was reported on this morning in *The Globe and Mail*.

This is a highly offensive document, and a serious insult to Canadian women, just in the same way that the Government discussion paper on charter equality was an insult. It confirms our suspicions that, whatever the Government's rhetoric, it has no intention of supporting the implementation of the goals of the Charter.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that the senior officers who wrote this document did so after scrapping a whole process that they had established within the Department of National Defence, under a consultant named Jim House, which was to provide for true consultation and participation by men and women at all levels of the Department of National Defence in the preparation of their submissions? Is that the way this report was developed?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member describes the document in his hands, I presume, as being an intended submission to the subcommittee now studying this matter. I know of no such submission in documentary form—

Some Hon. Members: Again?

Mr. Nielsen: —in documentary form that is so intended at all.

I read the press articles, including the one that the Hon. Member referred to, and others. It would be my intention to examine whatever document exists in order to acquaint myself with its contents.

The Hon. Member will be happy to know that I have written to the Chairman of the subcommittee offering to appear before the subcommittee at a mutually convenient date and time for the purpose of addressing this and other matters affecting the policy of the Department.

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, other Canadians have and will be reading this intended report with interest. Will the Minister be endorsing this as government policy? Particularly, does he really believe that Canadian women should suffer inequality in DND because women do so in some other countries, and because mixed combat units have never been tried before in Canada?

I ask him to answer that question bearing in mind that combat roles don't just mean pulling the trigger type jobs. According to DND definition, combat roles include such jobs as pilots, sonar technicians, weapons technicians, all sea artillery and infantry jobs. Are these to be denied women on the spurious grounds contained in this report?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member, who is a lawyer and who, at one time, was a Solicitor General in the previous administration, asks me to endorse something that I have just told him I have not seen. Surely even he would recognize the unreasonableness of that.

With respect to the role played and to be played by women in our Armed Forces, I think I can speak with specific and particular knowledge which is held fairly exclusively in the House. I can tell the Hon. Member of the significant contribution made by women in our Armed Forces during World War II, which was quite substantial in a wide variety of roles. I would expect that kind of contribution to continue, much to the credit of women, and much to the credit of Canada.

● (1420)

APPLICATION OF CHARTER OF RIGHTS TO WOMEN PERSONNEL

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, whatever the excellent role of women in World War II, I suggest it is a pretty patronizing observation to say that that is the level at which their participation will continue in the Department of National Defence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kaplan: Because the Minister of Justice said recently that he does not know what the Charter will eventually be determined to imply for women in the Department of National Defence, if the view is as expressed in this document can we get an assurance that the Government will not introduce a notwithstanding clause into legislation to prevent the Charter from applying to women in the Department of National Defence, giving them the rights that were intended when the Charter was introduced?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Charter is the law of the land and will be applied as the law of the land.

Mr. Chrétien: Apply it.

Mr. Nielsen: As far as being patronizing is concerned, the Hon. Member is patronizing. I have first-hand knowledge of