

The Address

principle, I would certainly tend to hire that person who has suffered discrimination under section 15 of our charter.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, like the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, I am pleased to see a greater number of women in the House of Commons. I personally think that if, in the past, the number of women had been higher in this place, Canada would probably be a different country and would have faced the economic and human problems differently. I therefore invite all the women in this House, regardless of their affiliation, to sometimes rise above party lines and form a common front, because I believe that men need to see such a demonstration.

I am also very pleased to see a number of members representing different cultural communities. I think this also reflects the nature of our country, which is a good thing in this House.

I appreciated the remarks of the hon. member for Mount Royal and I really hope that she did not just make a speech. I am not insinuating anything, but I know that the hon. member is tackling a very big problem. She will undoubtedly need a great deal of courage and also a lot of support from both sides of the House.

I believe she should concentrate her efforts on two aspects: the economic independence of women and zero tolerance toward violence. Too often still, in fact every day and every week, the newspapers are full of intolerable stories about women. We often see that men who wield some power, for example judges and policemen, and who have to deal with unfair situations or violence to women, react like men.

I have two questions. First, regarding the economic independence of women, I find it hard to see how women will fit in the infrastructure program designed to create jobs. The Secretary of State suggested that women should make proposals, but it is not certain that they will be the ones who will build the infrastructures, and I am a bit disappointed by that.

Second, the Secretary of State also referred to the protection of minorities. Given the fact that she represents a riding from Quebec, does the hon. member intend to explain outside Quebec, in the other provinces, how the fate of the anglophone minority in Quebec is different from that of the francophone minority in the other provinces?

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his comments. There is no doubt that I count on the support, not only of the women from all sides of the House, but also of the men, because without the support and help of our male colleagues, we will never succeed in improving the status of women and in showing that their cause is a just cause.

I truly appreciate the comments made by hon. member and I hope that his colleagues will indeed give me their help and support. I also noted that there are three women in his caucus whom I know very well, since I have had the opportunity to work with them during the last parliamentary session and also in Quebec.

• (1300)

I am convinced that when a women's caucus is set up in this House—which is something I will try to do soon—that caucus will help me, because its members will share my ideas on equal access for people, men and women both, whether on an economic, cultural, social or political level.

As for your questions on economic independence, I must say that when we think of public works, we only think of the so-called non-traditional work for women. But there are women who are just as capable as men. Some men are strong, but others are not so strong. Therefore, it is possible to find women who can work in these projects.

Let us not forget that on the eve of the 21st century, we have all kinds of technological support. Who uses the little computer? Who is behind the scenes? It is always women. And I have to say that you need women in order to promote infrastructure projects.

Basically, what I meant to say when I asked women to go and talk —

The Acting Speaker (Mr. LeBlanc): I would ask the hon. minister to end her sentence, but I must point out that questions and comments are now over.

[English]

Mrs. Finestone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to assure the members opposite and my colleagues that first the infrastructure program does include and will benefit women even if they just fix the parking lots and the lighting in our subway systems across this land.

With respect to minority rights, I assure that equality of opportunity, equality of access and the merits of bilingualism is something I will talk about across this land. I have done it in the past. I have been a guest speaker for the francophones in Saskatchewan and Alberta and I will continue to do so. I will also speak to the rights of anglophones in Quebec as integral to the whole Quebec picture.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment. I see there is a change in the Chair again. I have already congratulated Madam Speaker. I do wish the both of you the very best in this 35th Parliament.

As I stand here today I want everyone to know how proud I am to have this opportunity. My very special thanks goes out to the Wild Rose voters who put their faith in me last October 25. I would also like to thank those who worked so hard to get me