

*Status of Women*

Turning to government service itself, I am sure that hon. members take absolutely no satisfaction from the fact that Mrs. Irene Johnson, a member of the Public Service Commission, told the miscellaneous estimates committee recently that, despite efforts to recruit bright young women for careers in government, more than 98 per cent of the top jobs are still held by men. Mrs. Johnson said that at present 20 of 1,200 executive level bureaucrats are women, compared with nine of 868 in 1973. She told the committee, "Statistically there has been no progress".

[Translation]

Mrs. Johnson stated that the commission had very badly failed to bring able women over to the public service. The commission is now focusing its efforts on women who are already working within the public service, but that initiative yielded only 25 women who would have the required potential to occupy a post in an executive capacity.

[English]

The commission has managed to increase the proportion of women in the career assignment program, a training school for potential executives, to about 30 per cent. However, only about 50 of the 500 program graduates to date are women. Mrs. Johnson said the pool of available female talent remains too small to make appreciable progress. "It's hard to make perceptible gains when you have such a small base to work on," she said. Little trace remains of anti-female bias in government departments and greater progress should be made in the future, she said.

So I repeat, Mr. Speaker, the evidence from all quarters is clear and cries out for attention. The pace of progress is too slow and the government has to accept some responsibility for some of the foot-dragging. The minister may talk about other actions yet to come. When? Surely he does not feel that the campaign he conducted earlier this year, for example, is anything like an adequate response to the type of challenge I have been describing this afternoon? When are further actions to come?

The minister and his colleagues may go on making references to human rights, but he and others cannot escape the import of the bulletin issued by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women following a Vancouver meeting in mid-January of this year, which stated:

The major recommendations proposed by ACSW members at the meeting in Vancouver concerned the establishment of a federal human rights and interests commission. A wire sent by ACSW to Marc Lalonde, minister responsible for the status of women, read:

"The ACSW strongly condemns the federal government for its inaction on human rights legislation. As early as July, 1973, this legislation was clearly identified as the ACSW priority and in December, 1973, cabinet approval in principle was announced. The action of the federal government to date has consisted of nothing but ineffectual promises. ACSW demands immediate introduction of the human rights legislation."

I may say in all modesty, Mr. Speaker, that as early as the winter of 1972 and again in May, 1973, I proposed the establishment of a human rights commission as a very substantial measure of working toward equality for the status of women besides making certain that other sorts of equality exist in the country. I do not mean to suggest that it is easy to produce effective human rights legislation, but I say to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) and to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) that expectations were raised by the government—commit-

ments were made over two years ago—and the tone of the message from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women must surely indicate that there is no acceptability for complacency and indefinite delay.

The United Nations has proclaimed 1975 to be International Women's Year. Canada is participating in the promotion of the year but I fear we have a way to go before we can be said to be really participating in the spirit of the year. As individuals, we must all share some responsibility for that. As members of parliament, our burden is larger. The burden is heaviest of all for those who occupy the treasury benches. It is a burden that cannot be shrugged off by any of us. It certainly cannot be shrugged off by members of the government. The cause of equality would be far better served if the government stopped pretending that things are going well and it is doing as much as it ought to be doing in this field.

● (1620)

**Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie):** Mr. Speaker, today we are dealing with Bill C-16, the omnibus bill on the status of women which will provide needed changes to existing legislation ranging from unemployment insurance to the Canada Elections Act, the Immigration Act and the National Defence Act respecting female cadets.

Every day I am in the House of Commons I see the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) wearing his International Women's Year button which states "Why Not!". When I look at this government's record of legislation in implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women to end discrimination against women in this country, I think it would be more appropriate, instead of wearing a button saying "Why not!" if the minister wore one saying "Why Bother?"

The record of this government in trying to eliminate discrimination based on sex is very sad. The cold, hard facts are that despite the throne speech promises and the pious platitudes from the minister, women in Canada are still discriminated against in the areas of job opportunities, job positions and rank, pay and legislation presently in existence at both the federal and the provincial level. They are also discriminated against in the government's own civil service and its operations.

The sad fact is that legislators have been too slow to react to the demands of women for equality in our society. Legislation to end discrimination against women has never been a high priority item for this government. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women began its hearings in 1967. Of the 122 recommendations it made which apply to the federal government, to date only 42 have been implemented. This bill will raise the number to 50.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure the hon. member would not like wilfully to mislead the House. I tabled in this House some time ago a full and complete answer on the question of how many recommendations of the royal commission have been implemented and the figures contained therein do not coincide with those being put forward by the hon. member. The correct answer is in the records of this House. If the hon. member