

Oral Questions

report, and I expect to be able to give the Hon. Member further details in the near future.

[English]

REQUEST FOR LEGISLATION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister has had an opportunity to digest Judge Abella's report, and when he meets his provincial colleagues at the First Ministers' meeting on St. Valentine's Day, will he urge, particularly his Conservative colleagues, to legislate equal pay for work of equal value, and to legislate affirmative action or, as Judge Abella puts it, employment equity for women, visible minorities, the disabled, and native peoples, or will he seek only, in the words of the Throne Speech, to further define the matter?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I urge not only my Conservative colleagues. This is not a partisan issue. Fairness for women is something that concerns us all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: We plan to seek the support and guidance of members of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party for programs that are designed to do what is long overdue and something which, dismayingly, and I say this with regret was not done in 20 long Liberal years, and that is to bring about a degree of equality for women in this country. That is what we are going to try to do.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I would think that the Liberal record on women's issues stands for itself as an example to us all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMPOSITION OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on May 25 in Toronto, the Prime Minister promised to double the representation of women on federal boards and commissions. There happen to be no women on the Deputy Prime Minister's cost-cutting advisory board, no women on the CBC chopping block committee, no women on the new VIA Rail advisory committee, and no women among the new CDIC or fisheries projects. I believe the Prime Minister got off to a good start by nominating eight women as cabinet Ministers. Would he talk to the cabinet Ministers and ask them to follow his example when appointing people to boards and commissions?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I know of the Right Hon. Member's very substantial degree of concern and record of accomplishment in this area. I would like to assure him, because it is not a partisan issue, that we shall be giving the highest priority to ensuring, in a way that I hope meets with his agreement, the proper and fair representa-

tion of women throughout the Government of Canada. That may, and indeed will, require legislative considerations that we will bring forward. At all times, I know that the principal objective will be fairness and economic equality for women and, as Judge Abella points out, for other groups in our society as well.

ENFORCEMENT MECHANISM SUGGESTION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, last night on the television show *The Journal*, the Hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration announced with fanfare and pride that the commitment to equal pay appeared for the first time in the Throne Speech of 1984. I would like to bring to her attention that equal pay has been part of the Canadian law since 1978. The issue now is how to make that principle work. I am pleased that the Prime Minister calls it a high priority.

● (1420)

The Minister stated on *The Journal* that she would have a lot of trouble with enforcement, and that further studies would have to be undertaken. Does the Minister agree with Judge Abella that the enforcement mechanism is necessary? Does she so agree?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the Hon. Member and the House that no Government heretofore ever had the courage to incorporate the phrase "equal pay for work of equal value" in a Throne Speech. I am glad to inform her of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, there are 117 recommendations in the report. It is a very valuable report, and I hope that every Member will take the opportunity to read it. One of the most valuable parts of the report is the introduction of the term "employment equity" into the language, so that we do indeed know about what we are talking about. I would like to tell the Hon. Member that all of the recommendations will be considered by Cabinet. Then we will decide whether legislation will be necessary to bring about the desired end.

STUDY OF REPORT

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I believe I heard the Prime Minister allude to legislation. However, there is a difference between law and rhetoric. Just apply the law.