

Supply

Around the world democratic rights is one of the most powerful tools. Look at South Africa. It is a prime example. The right to vote, the right of assembly, the right to speak, the right of mobility are things women have to make work for themselves. That is the basis of a firm foundation on which to build economic empowerment. That makes it a powerful tool.

At this time the government is aware economic growth by itself is not enough. Women still remain clustered in traditionally female occupations such as teaching, nursing, clerical or sales and service work.

I was so pleased when I went to Montreal two months ago and met with a group of young girls in a classroom dedicated to teaching math and sciences to these young women. I want to see these young girls 20 years from now. I want to see them when they are in high school and university. I told one young girl her seat is waiting for her in the House of Commons.

An hon. member: Look out world.

Ms. Blondin-Andrew: Look out world is right. Those young people are going to be a huge factor not in just the empowerment of their specific gender, but of this country. If we use that 52 per cent resource to its maximum, we can help to abate a lot of the social problems. We can help to abate a lot of the economic woes that befall our communities.

In this country we are so good at building infrastructure. If we need a road, we build it. If we need a hospital, we build it. If we need banks, we build them. If we need airports, we build them. The one thing that is critical and has not happened over different levels of successive governments is building that firm human foundation, that firm human infrastructure that is spiritual, social, cultural and linguistic which will result in children staying in school and will not drop out.

That is not always the result because we have a disempowerment somewhere along this infrastructure path we have taken. I am not saying that we should not have infrastructure. I am saying that if we have it, it should work for us. It should give us the results we need.

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We should be producing. We have skating rinks and curling rinks. We have these other kinds of institutions and infrastructure. They should be producing better athletes. They should be producing children who will be able to set their goals and reach them with their families and their instructors.

Somehow we have to get back to the basics of making those things work for people, not just women, all people in this country. We need to say real empowerment is not the empowerment of one individual. Real empowerment is the empowerment of our families, of our children, of our communities and of our country.

A country is not about one person. A country is about a collective, all the people who live here, all the people who come here from other parts of the world who believe we still have the best country in the world. I certainly believe that.

I am not turning a blind eye and saying we do not have problems. We have problems, but at least we have the democratic right, the equality of opportunity to be able to deal with those problems, to make a better tomorrow for ourselves and for our children.

If all the government did was rely on the market, as some in the House would prefer, we would see only a glacial change in the labour force situation of women. This government believes it can do better. It recognizes the continuing need to help women move into new growth areas. It recognizes its own programs and services can help to bring us closer to that goal. That is important in terms of the government's employment programs.

Hon. members will be aware of many of the programs and services provided by Human Resources Development Canada. I am sure almost all of us have Employment Canada centres in our ridings. These offices have made real efforts to reach out to women, to make programs and services more accessible, to break down the stereotypes and the barriers to full participation by women.

In the last full fiscal year, 1993-94, more than one-quarter of a million Canadian women, 262,392, participated in HRDC employment programs and services of all kinds. That figure was fully 28,555 more than in the previous year. This is so absolutely important.

There is a lot of technical information I have here which I have not shared with the House. It takes co-operation. It takes true partnership. It takes true dignity and respect to really empower the individual and to empower a community, a family, a country. It can be done by respecting and recognizing the power and the real empowerment of women.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague opposite made some interesting comments. She mentioned points regarding the status of women that certainly raise some questions. I am criticizing my hon. colleague for her government's lack of concrete action.

Both she and her colleagues on the government side point to certain situations, but they have yet to put forward any concrete measures, like a day care system; instead, we get budget cuts hitting community agencies and groups that provide assistance to women, and we get UI benefits based on family income. What does the government intend to do to help women?

They point to certain things, and say that they are aware of the situation, of violence against women, but what have they done to the budget dealing with violence against women? In two weeks there will be no more money for that, and we know very well that the government has not stated what it intends to do about it. As recently as yesterday, the secretary of state let it be known, on