

wealth the Speech from the Throne gives a dismissive nod in three lines. There was no promise to reintroduce the Multi-culturalism Act. Cultures in exile from their home soil need nurturing. This Government does not seem to feel this. If the Government does not perform, it will let Canada's rich cultural tapestry grow threadbare, and we really must fight this.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the Government has acknowledged that the legitimate concerns of women and young people deserve a place at the top of the national agenda. However, I am disappointed, as are so many, that it has failed to follow up on the acknowledgement with any evidence of immediate action. The Government has sent the signal all right; it has sent an alarm signal that said "stop" to all those efforts under-way to remove the barriers and to extend an opportunity for women and young people. For this reason the Throne Speech has fallen short of expectations of Canadians for change. In the months ahead we will demand more than signals. We will expect action; action on contract compliance, affirmative action, pension reform, child care, pornography, prevention of family violence as well as the reintroduction of the Bills on divorce and multiculturalism, on jobs, education and training for youth. Along with my colleagues I plan to be the "porte-parole" of the grass roots in this House.

[Translation]

We are warning the Government because we take its good-will for granted. However, we make the firm commitment to remind the Government constructively of its promises to the Canadian people. We want priority to be given to the urgent needs of all Canadians, to their economic and social rights. We shall give prompt support to any constructive legislative proposal.

[English]

Women's issues and youth issues cannot be dealt with in isolation from larger economic and social decisions. Rather, they must run to the very core of what governmental decision making is all about. Will that constant awareness prevail at senior levels of government? Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members: We will be vigilant in seeing that it does prevail in order to uphold a tradition of social action and commitment that speaks to the very best of Canada and Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions or comments?

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone) for her excellent maiden speech and also for her very important position as critic responsible for the status of women in her Party.

I would like to ask her if she is familiar with the proposal made particularly by some of the women parliamentarians in this House in the last Parliament. This was supported by many women's organizations across the country. The proposal was to establish a standing committee of the House of Commons which would be responsible for the status of women. Our Party initiated that proposal some time ago and it was supported by

The Address—Mrs. Finestone

some Progressive Conservatives in the last Parliament. Unfortunately, it was obstructed by the that Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

We saw this committee as being tri-partite with an equal balance in its representation from all Parties so it would not be a partisan kind of decision making. It would be the watchdog of all legislation as to its effect on women. It would look at women's programs under the Secretary of State and groups such as the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women. It would be generally concerned with the place where a network of women across the country could report.

Does the Hon. Member now support this proposal and will her Party support it?

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member. Her reputation for interest in women's issues and for her commitment and involvement in this House precedes her.

As to the question, I must say I heard the Hon. Member make that recommendation the other day. My immediate reaction was: My goodness, what a marvellous idea. Then I sat back and thought for a few minutes. I cannot give a concrete response but I can tell the Hon. Member what my thoughts were. I place this before her and I would be happy to speak with her later.

Women have lived for a very long time in isolation from the mainstream of decision making. We have fought long and hard for equal representation as partners in today's society. We are finally making it. We are now 26 in this House. Every issue which touches humanity, our concern, are men and women issues. Therefore it is my feeling that, when it comes to the legislative process, I personally—I cannot speak for my colleagues because I have not discussed it with them—wish to sit with my partner, the man in my life, the men with whom I live, the men who are going to share the society which we will build, to make what would seem to be the best decision for society as a whole.

This does not in any way, in my view, remove the need for a concerted effort on the part of women in a separate kind of place to look at the issues. If the Hon. Member is saying to me, let us have a standing committee, I would say no, because the tendency in society is then to dump everything there that concerns women. I do not want to isolate women in that way. What happens to them touches the whole world.

If we want to vet all legislation coming through covering farmers, fisher ladies and fishermen, all legislation, then yes, but in an unofficial way, then I would be happy to join her and on that I might agree with her. I think in a sense I have made a decision while talking to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Hon. Member for her election to the House of Commons and to congratulate the people of Mount Royal on the dramatic improvement in the representation that they receive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!