

Status of Women Study

vincial conference to consider the implementation of the recommendations of the commission which fall within provincial jurisdiction or which are the joint responsibility of the parliament of Canada and the legislatures of the provinces.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the motion which I have moved is designed to encourage the early and substantial implementation of the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. We wholeheartedly approve of the central principle of the report. A meaningful equality of opportunity to share in the responsibilities of society as well as in its privileges and prerogatives should be afforded to everyone in Canadian society. The commission's report clearly reveals that at the present time women in Canada are frequently being denied their fair share of both the privileges and prerogatives.

The report is based on the principle enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all people are equal in dignity and rights. The implementation of the report would effect a needed and important change in society. It deserves the support of all citizens, of men as well as of women, and the serious attention of this Parliament.

We are, of course, well aware that legislative changes by themselves are not enough. We need a change of attitudes as well as of laws; we should not delude ourselves that equal opportunity of employment for women is likely to become a reality in a society which does not make and carry out the necessary plans to provide full employment for all. Nevertheless, the carrying out of the recommendations of the Royal Commission in the legislative field will have a tremendous symbolic and educational effect. It will bring about a genuine social revolution.

We are encouraged by the speech made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in Toronto last Wednesday in which he indicated his concern about this subject. Perhaps I could take as a text for my remarks two statements made by him in that speech. The first one is:

It is always easy to talk of change—talk is often an excuse for inaction.

Later, he said:

I invite all Canadians to exhibit impatience with our rate of progress in this respect.

We agree with the Prime Minister that talk of change in this sphere of the position of women in our society will not be enough. Inaction cannot be tolerated. It is time we in Parliament exhibited the impatience with our rate of progress which the Prime Minister has invited. I am sure the women of Canada are impatient. We must be impatient, too. What the women of Canada fear, and what we fear, is that the Prime Minister's words will be verified and "talk" will replace "action". It is for this reason that the motion which I have introduced proceeds beyond the realm of generalities. It calls for action upon certain specific key areas covered by the report of the Royal Commission.

The approval by this House of the motion which I have introduced will give the go ahead signal not for further studies, not for further task forces, but for legislation by

[Mr. Brewin.]

this Parliament in accordance with the recommendations of the report. Our caucus has already studied the report. It has approved the report's main recommendations in a statement which we made public. We have promised to put the full weight of this party behind 50 of the report's recommendations which come under federal jurisdiction. It is impossible, of course, to mention all of the 50 recommendations in the time that I have available, but we have specifically emphasized in the motion certain key recommendations.

The first of these key recommendations is the adoption of a national day care act. The provision of day care centres is centrally important. As the royal commission points out, that was the subject of strong representations from every part of Canada. Day care centres are of supreme importance to women who are in the position of a single parent, who do not wish themselves and their families to depend on welfare, and who, if they are to take employment, must provide for the care of their children. Day care centres are important to large numbers of other women who, whether or not we approve of it, are involved and will continue to be involved in the labour force, and to many women who are not in paid employment, such as housewives who, for one reason or another, need day care services for their children.

● (3:10 p.m.)

We agree with the report when it asserts that it is not trying to compel women to take employment. The report recommends freedom of choice but this freedom of choice involves an opportunity to be employed under conditions of equality with men. There is a nation-wide need and demand for child care services. As the report says, private initiative cannot begin to cope with so large a problem. I remind the House that other governments have effectively done so.

We are aware, of course, that under the present Canada Assistance Plan the federal government pays half the operating cost of approved day care centres. The commission, however, points out that this has not brought about the provision of day care centres in numbers anywhere close to the need and the demand. It, therefore, recommends that the federal government should not only pay half the operating cost but, during an initial seven year period, 70 per cent of the capital cost.

My colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis), who is herself a shining example of the effective role that women can play in public life—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin:—will take part later in the debate and will expand on the need for national assistance for day care centres. I would just like to remind the House that the provision of day care centres is not something which should be done to satisfy a small group of women. It is of the utmost importance to the welfare of a very large number of children. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics, in its report made in April, 1967, shows that one in five mothers of children under 14, a total of 540,000 mothers,