

Supply

Bélanger-Campeau Commission hearings, that they want major changes. These women want the federal government to stop interfering in areas affecting them, such as work conditions, family law, income security, day care and abortion.

The involvement of two levels of government in these areas, they said, leads to administrative overlap, program and structure duplication, a lack of harmony between provincial and federal policies, hence a waste of public funds and the inability of the Quebec government to initiate a coherent policy on women's issues.

Do you want examples, Madam Speaker? Maternity leaves are granted pursuant to the Act respecting Labour Standard while compensation for lost income is paid pursuant to the Unemployment Insurance Act, which makes it difficult for Quebec to implement a coherent policy concerning parental leaves.

• (1710)

Let us deal with the preventive withdrawal of employees who are nursing or pregnant. In Quebec these women are covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, while federal employees and women employed by federally regulated businesses are covered by the Canada Labour Code. The level of compensation is not the same, which has the effect of creating two classes of female employees in Quebec.

Furthermore, federal intervention in family matters illustrates the double jurisdiction that exists in matters of family law. The federal Parliament has jurisdiction over marriage and divorce; Quebec has the authority to legislate on the celebration of marriage, matrimonial property, adoption and separation.

As the Council on the Status of Women said so succinctly, women, depending on whether they get married, separate or get a divorce may be provincially or federally regulated. Furthermore, this double jurisdiction prevents Quebec from creating a single family court.

I could go on and on and talk about the overlap in income security, social services, day care and many other areas.

There is a lack of consistency that has often been criticized and which women's groups brought up before the regional commissions on the future of Quebec.

My colleagues have, throughout the day, reminded this House of the government's failure to adopt concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women. Bloc members also condemned the drastic cuts in the latest federal budget and made it clear that women may be severely affected. The government claims it cannot afford to take steps to promote equality and equity, but it is not doing a thing to stop the waste, duplication and inconsistencies generated by overlapping federal and provincial policies.

The federal government has proven it is incapable of responding to the urgent needs and repeated requests of women in Quebec. As I pointed out earlier, Quebec is more progressive in a number of areas. All it needs is the tools to go even further and pursue an integrated development process.

There is an English expression that says "if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen". Women want the federal government to take this to heart and let Quebec have sole authority over areas connected with the status of women.

For all these reasons, I fully support the motion moved by the hon. member for Québec, and I urge the federal government to withdraw now from all areas under provincial jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks. I would like to follow her lead and take the debate in a slightly different direction. I ask her to remember that Quebec society of say 50 years ago was quite a different society than it is now.

It was a society that was very much oriented toward the church and the family. Indeed, during the second world war the francophone population of Quebec opted for the motto of the Vichy French, that the family and home were the important things rather than the traditional French motto of liberty and equality.

After the second world war we moved into a period in which there was the great liberation of Quebec socially. There have been wonderful advances in Quebec in freeing up the contribution of Quebec's women to the economy and culture of the country—not only francophone but anglophone as well.

Does the member not feel this change—it is a profound change that occurred in Quebec in the fifties and the sixties—owes much not just to the forces within Quebec society but also to Canada itself? I remind her that some very positive initiatives were coming from the federal government, particularly under Mr. Pearson and Mr. Louis St. Laurent which led to the kind of society that she wishes to see in Quebec.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Mrs. Debien: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. Indeed, Quebec has changed a lot, particularly since the fifties and the sixties, in the context of what was called the "quiet revolution".

The hon. member tells me that there was a profound change, and I was part of it; he also says that this profound change was due to forces within Canada that accompanied with the forces within Quebec. I would also like to ask a question to the hon. member. I would like to know what these forces are, because he