

Statements by Ministers

Then, at the end of the briefing we had on that report, we were told that the new Task Force on Child Care budget has just been cut to 5 points. Is this a public relations exercise on the part of the Government, or is it definitely its way of tackling the child care problem?

I obviously object to the cuts that were also announced in the new Budget concerning the positive action for women program of the Secretary of State. The Montreal Office of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women will close as of May 31, 1986. If this Conservative Government wants to show it is doing something for women, it will have to prove it. Concerning also the program for battered women and all the grants, it was acknowledged in this House last week that everything was under review, that we would see in due course where the grants would go. There would be an overall approach.

For now I will tell the Conservative Government that I am very satisfied with the declaration of principle, but I would very much like to see the Government fulfill all those wonderful promises we have been hearing about since September of 1984.

[English]

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, Canadian women join their sisters around the world to celebrate our achievements in working towards greater equality and our determination to work together in solidarity with our brothers to overcome the many obstacles that remain. At the Nairobi conference we joined women from rich and poor nations who are determined that Governments must make major changes to overcome obstacles and achieve real equality by the year 2,000. We will help each other.

Here in Canada, women in recent years have organized as never before to create a much broader understanding and to demand needed changes. We must remove economic barriers which still keep women in low-paying jobs with inadequate child care. We must continue to work for equal treatment and fair opportunity on all fronts. Women have achieved political power. We must use that power to bring about needed reforms to achieve true equality.

This Government made promises to women when it was elected. It is accountable to women to keep these promises. We are pleased that jobs for women have increased in some regions. However, we want these jobs to be adequately paid and full-time, with equal opportunities for promotion. Women want more access to training and retraining programs with child care, and language assistance for immigrant women. Women were promised employment equity. Unfortunately, the Government refuses to change the employment equity legislation to reflect the very serious concerns of Canadian women, particularly women trade unionists. We were promised pension reform and protection for older women. There has been no expansion of the Canada Pension Plan. The greatest crisis in Canada is perhaps the need for child care. Canadian women want definite action this year, not just a further delay.

In Nairobi, Canada advocated increased assistance for women in developing countries, women who are barely surviving and carrying tremendous burdens. I am ashamed as a Canadian that Canada has broken faith and has cut back on foreign aid to these women.

● (1220)

At the First Ministers' Conference in Halifax before Christmas the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) committed his Government to a framework for economic equality with particular priorities to the impact of economic decisions on women. In the most important of government economic decisions, however, the Budget, the Prime Minister has broken his promises to the women of Canada. Unfortunately the Conservative Budget has dealt women a backward blow. Women who still earn 63 cent dollars will suffer most from the very unfair tax measures which will cost families over \$1,300, including last year's sales taxes. This will push many women below the poverty line. The refundable tax credit will not begin to cover the actual sales tax poorest families' pay, much less compensate them for deindexed family benefits which will decrease the value of their income each year. Women are the victims as tough restraint programs are imposed by this Government. Women in clerical and service jobs are the first to go as public services are chopped, contracted out or privatized. The \$4.8 billion Health and Welfare cut over the next four years and \$2 billion in reduced transfer payments will deprive women of services as well as jobs. As I said, we are very concerned that Canada's job strategies also have had budget cuts.

Today we will be receiving the recommendations of the parliamentary Task Force on Child Care chaired by Katie Cooke. I am encouraged that the Minister has assured Canadian women that this important report will be given serious consideration and will provide the launching pad for this Government's special committee so we may find funding mechanisms for accessible, affordable quality child care. However, we do not want more promises. The Government must make an initial infusion of funds this year as an expression of good faith.

On behalf of Canadian women, my Party extends very warm greetings to women across Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific, to the Arctic Circle. Women who give so much of their love, their talent, their energies and their work to their families, their neighbours, their fellow workers and, indeed, to humanity, we salute you.

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Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, relating to the point of order that was answered by the Speaker about an hour ago about reports, I wish to ask the Minister of State for Immigration (Mr. McLean) whether he intends to fulfil the obligation of the Standing Orders by introducing this day a response to the fifth report of the Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, which was tabled in this House 120 days ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chairman must rule that this is not a point of order, it is a question.