

are laggard. A lot of people in Canada need to be helped in their thinking. Thinking in the old-fashioned manner is just too dangerous. If we are to make good progress in this country, and if women are to take their position as full partners alongside men, this government must take immediate action to implement the report on the status on women. Sufficient research has been done on this report and in other places. The time for action is now.

Mr. Bruce Howard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the debate today with great interest. I am rather surprised at the level of debate and the diffidence with which members of the House seem to have approached the subject of the rights of women in society. Hon. members should have much stronger views on many of these subjects than have been expressed today. One member indicated that he was opposed to any changes with regard to the status of women. He then went on to say what great people women were. I thought he was going to end up by saying that some of his best friends were women. That was about the extent of the contribution he made to the importance of the rights of women.

I do not see how any politician can be under any illusion about the value of women in our society. In my political work I have found that women are involved in politics and men talk about it. When you want to get something done in politics, you get women to help you. After all is done, the men sit in the back room and discuss politics. It is the women who do and the men who discuss.

I do not think any member of this House should be backward about assisting women to achieve the rights in society which they deserve. Roughly 50 per cent of our population is composed of women. We do not see a representation of that extent in the House of Commons. A number of minority groups are represented here. We have one Indian, one black and one woman. It is a disgrace that a group in our society which represents half of our population is represented in such a meagre way.

Mr. Alexander: What do you suggest?

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, I do not mean that in reference to the very excellent representation we have from the hon. member who spoke before me. She makes up for many members in this House.

Mr. Alexander: You almost got out of it, but not quite.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Over the centuries we seem to have developed a kind of mystique in dealings between the two sexes in our society. A couple of days ago I met a member of this House in a gift shop on the Mall. He was shopping. When I asked him why he was shopping, he said that his wife had not spoken to him for three days.

Mr. Dinsdale: Lucky fellow.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): He said he wanted to pick up some little thing just to show his appreciation.

Status of Women Study

This is the kind of impasse we have reached in our society as between men and women. It is time we approached the subject seriously and paid attention to the obvious wrongs that exist in our society and in our dealings as between the two sexes.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Without question there is unfavourable discrimination in respect of half of our population and it is time we did something to clear it up. A number of hon. members have dealt with specific examples of discrimination in our society and I, too, wish to refer to specific examples. Discrimination under the law is surely one of the most tried and true methods of eroding society. Wherever the concept of one law for the rich and one law for the poor has been carried out to any great extent, major revolutions have erupted with the oppressed class shaking off the shackles with the frightening violence of the Russian revolution, the French revolution, or the restrained violence of the racist upheavals in the United States.

Usually such discrimination has been directed against a minority in society, whether based on race, religion or social class. Women, however, are not a minority group. My guess is that they make up about 50 per cent of our population and yet in one area we see discrimination under the law against this non-minority group based solely on the difference of sex. While it is doubtful that the women of Canada are on the verge of sharpening their guillotines, laying in a supply of gunshot or studying the tactics of urban guerrilla warfare, an examination of the laws against discrimination in the labour forces as they affect women can only lead us to the conclusion that they are more honoured in the breach than they are in the observance. Nobody in Canada seriously denies the validity of the conception of equal pay for equal work. Many of those who dispute the claims of women regarding discrimination in the labour force point to provincial and federal legislation as proof that such discrimination does not exist. This is not proof.

As the Royal Commission on the Status of Women has stated, "International, federal and provincial acceptance of the principle of equal pay has largely settled the former issue"; that is, the issue whether or not there should be different rates of pay for men and women. But what these jurisdictions have failed to do is ensure that the principle is universally observed. Those words are to be found on page 66 of the report. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a failing in the judicial system which is, unfortunately, not uncommon—that while the law exists on the statute books, it is not enforced and thereby loses any significance in terms of its impact on the social questions with which it is supposed to deal.

The studies undertaken by the royal commission indicate that while every province, with the exception of the Yukon Territory, has legislation specifically prohibiting different rates of pay on the basis of sex, and while the federal government also has regulations governing equal pay for female employees which apply as well to Crown corporations, there is nevertheless real evasion of the intent of the law not only on the part of employers but