

Supply

he starts speaking very slowly. His solemn tones are no guarantee of serious commitment to an issue, although he is constantly trying to have Canadian men and women believe otherwise.

During the last election campaign millions of T.V. viewers were treated to the party leaders' debate on the status of women. It was the first time the feminist lobby managed to organize a televised debate of this order. A first, not only for Canada but in fact a world première the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, of which I was president at the time, initiated the negotiations with the C.B.C., and once the framework was established we handed over to the N.A.C., which was responsible for everything up to the televised debate.

This brief success did not have a sequel, and we have every reason to believe it was because the Progressive Conservative Party came to power. However, before the television cameras, the Member for Baie-Comeau (Mr. Mulroney), promised us everything: funding for daycare centres, for shelters for women and children who are victims of family violence, affirmative action programs with provisions for monitoring and evaluation, programs to prepare women for technological change, support programs for businesswomen, and so forth. And what has the Progressive Conservative Government done since it came to power?

Last fall, after hesitating for a long time about whether it was going to maintain the universality of social programs—in that debate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) did not come out the winner in Cabinet, to put it mildly—the Government decided to do nothing. Indeed, attacks by the Opposition and the pressure of public opinion managed to shake the convictions of those in the Prime Minister's circle who firmly believed that Canadian men and women had given them a mandate for a shift to the right in economic and social policy. However, Mr. Speaker, that is not quite the case. During the last election campaign, the Progressive Conservative Party tried to give as little indication as possible of what it was going to do, and in conducting its campaign, it tried to please everyone. However, Canadian women managed to get some commitments out of the Prime Minister, and I will get back to these in a minute.

This Government, which has been trying so hard to govern by consensus, should realize that one of the issues in Canada on which there is the broadest consensus is that of the economic equality of women. Since the Government came into office, it did not do much for women, very little even with respect to appointments. I heard the Minister saying earlier that 22 per cent of appointees were women. It is rather interesting since my calculations markedly differ from his, beginning with the number of women who have been appointed executive assistants in the various departments. I would also like to know how many women have been appointed political assistants in various offices. I think our figures lead to quite different conclusions.

Last March, on the occasion of International Women's Day, the Government put up a good front when it introduced measures to ensure employment equal opportunities for

women, native people, visible minorities and disabled persons. Compliance is voluntary. As you may recall, voluntary compliance on the competitive labour scene is synonymous with inefficiency. This has been demonstrated in many research projects, the least important of which is certainly not Judge Rosalie Abella's work.

On page 217 of her report, Judge Abella writes:

It is difficult to see how voluntary programs might appreciably improve employment opportunities for women, native people, disabled persons or visible minorities.

Judge Abella goes on to say:

Given the seriousness and apparent immutability of discrimination in employment, it would be totally unrealistic and excessively naive to rely solely on good will, however necessary in voluntary programs, to guarantee equality.

Not only does the Conservative Government not want to define what it means by equality, but it must be noted that no coercive measure is provided should Crown corporations fail to establish an over-all plan to reach equality targets in employment. The Conservative Government does not want to urge private companies to set up employment equality programs. Apparently it does not follow the same logic with respect to work and women in the public service, Government agencies and Crown corporations on one hand, and in the private sector on the other hand.

We know that employment equality measures apply to the public sector and to private companies that get Government contracts. The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) said she was positive those measures were effective because the maximum use of manpower resources—and therefore the hiring and promotion of women—were one of the basic factors of efficiency in the work-place. If the Minister really believes that, she should encourage private firms to set up job training programs, which could be perfectly suited to the particular conditions of every firm. The employment legislation must have teeth in order to be effective.

On March 27, 1985, in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal, a few hundred women who met there under the auspices of the Progressive Conservative Women's Caucus were told that without concrete measures such as those recommended in the Abella report, practical results in the area of women equality in employment would be a long way off. But Canadian women are anxious to get what the Hon. Member for Baie-Comeau promised them during the last election. Will we have to wait for another March 8 in order that a further timid step be made along the road to economic equality for women? The Conservative Party's book of promises included certain statements concerning women in the economy, and I would like to recall them just in case our friends opposite might forget about them.

In a press release dated July 26, 1984, it was stated that the Conservative Party wanted to implement positive action programs, with monitoring and evaluation measures in the Public Service, Government agencies and Crown corporations. The Conservative Party also claimed it supported the development and implementation of efficient programs to prepare