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SUBMISSION

to

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

by the

FARM WOMEN'S UNION OF ALBERTA



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The Farm Women's Union of Alberta welcomes the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and the broad terms of reference which provide for an extensive and intensive survey of the laws, practices, and potential role of women as citizens of Canada. We trust that the information and inspiration gathered through this endeavour will provide a new manifesto for the women of this generation, and set a pattern that will make possible better lives for our daughters and grand-daughters in the century to come.

Career Opportunities

In considering the laws and practices under federal jurisdiction concerning the political rights of women, our contention is that women are inadequately represented in professional posts, in public life, and in politics. Although women today hold responsible positions, and discharge their duties well, we maintain

that there is still not the scope for women that there is for men in the higher echelons of employment.

These conditions may be attributed to the following primary causes:

1. Women are barred by the tradition that man is master--an attitude that has been practiced for centuries and one that we cannot hope to change over night,
2. Although there are many fields in which women have been proven to excel, they are reluctant to aspire to their highest potential for fear of coming under social criticism--e.g. Avoiding motherhood, being masculine, neglecting her family, etc.
3. Woman being endowed with the gift of motherhood does not have the freedom to plan her life. Her procreative power has in fact restrained her from achieving her highest standard of attainment in other fields.
4. Canadian Law regards a wife as her husbands' dependent when in reality she is a responsible contributing partner to the economic enterprise, and yet there is no monetary value placed on the contributions of women as home makers.

5. In marriage a woman relinquishes her name and identity as a person.
6. Laws concerning women have been formulated exclusively by men, with little or no regard to womens desires or needs.

In our modern world it is made to seem natural that the occupants of certain swivel chairs should be male. The candidacy of a woman is seldom considered even when the subject in question is of a specific concern to women as mothers and teachers. It remains noticeable how many boards and commissions of vital interest to women consist totally of men even though there are many qualified women from whom to choose.

Social change since the turn of the century has had a marked impact on the role of women in the Canadian labour force. Two world wars, a depression, and industrial automation have started a social revolution and a new pattern of life. Millions of women - freed by technology from many household tasks have become integrated into a variety of social and economic fields. While marriage and motherhood are obviously an essential part of life - they are no longer considered the whole of a womens career.

Economic Importance of the Female Labor Force

Today Canada has a female work force that makes up one-third of our working population. If women were to stop working tomorrow, our entire economy would come to a standstill through lack of services that are performed by women. Yet, for all the discussion, practically no action has been taken, no satisfactory policy formulated to meet and accommodate this revolution which so deeply affects our cultural pattern and the economy of our country.

Part of the blame for this inaction must fall on the sheer irrelevance of the attitude to working women. As an economic fact of life, the working wife and mother has been continuously ignored. Angry denunciations of the woman who neglects her family, or impassioned arguments for feminine emancipation, have served equally to divert attention from the economic facts.

Why Women Work

Canadian women work for the same primary reasons that men do:

1. To satisfy their physical needs
2. To maintain an adequate standard of living for their families

3. To attain fulfillment in life-which to many can only be brought about through a sense of achievement that they do not find in domestic duties of the home.

The welfare of a nation is dependent not only on its economic status or its wealth; but also on the individual behaviour of its citizens. Pronounced discrimination and restrictions are definitely prevalent which render it impossible for our society to advance to its highest level, due to the generally accepted concept that women find employment outside the home only because they are needed in the labour force.

Barriers Faced By Women Workers

Barriers to advancement for girls are prevalent in our educational institutions. Curriculums are geared in favor of masculine attitudes and occupations. Little encouragement is extended to girls who wish to take up electrical engineering, surveying, etc. Wastage into marriage is still expounded as a legitimate argument. As a result, many women have been restricted from obtaining the training of which they are capable, which automatically places them in the lower category of remuneration for labour.

Special Aptitudes of Women Workers

Although the potential of women in the labour force can not definitely be ascertained without further study and research, we are in accord with the following assertions resulting from the research of the German Federation of Industry. German employer studies show that women are clearly superior to men in a surprisingly number of jobs, in a variety of fields. Work requiring patience and precision is especially suited to female employees. In positions that involve human relations - dealing with the public, supervising other women and girls, counselling, and in general serving as a "mother figure" - there is no such thing as "equality" - the female is clearly superior to the male.

Equal Pay For Equal Work - An Unsound Concept

Women do great injustice to themselves by harping on "equal pay for equal work". By concentrating their demands on "equal pay" gifted women are down-grading their special aptitudes and setting artificial brakes on pay scales.

Under the "equal pay" shibboleth, which we have on paper only - women dare not demand the pay to which their aptitude entitles them without bringing into question the whole fabric

of "equal pay" logic. The result is that females are barred from seeking careers in business and industry out of discouragement at having wage levels dictated by male workers. Women must be protected from labour exploitation by minimum wage legislation in that wage and salary scales should be adjusted to skill and special aptitudes - and not to sex.

According to the Department of Labour statistics the position of Canadian working women is sad indeed. Women are paid from \$10.00 to \$25.00 less per week than men, in similar jobs. Although we have equal pay legislation right across Canada, in no place in Canada is it being enforced. This apathy towards the working woman and her problems really amounts to active discrimination.

Problems Faced By Working Mothers

Wives who work are expected to shoulder two jobs at once.

The Department of Labour comments that - even when both parents work - the mother must assume the primary responsibilities for the home and the family. The result is a double-shift with its attendant exhaustion - all for considerably less pay than men receive.

The lack of adequate day care services, and foster home care for the children of working mothers, causes worry and frustration which impair efficiency.

The majority of working women are concentrated in the lower brackets of clerical services and manufacturing jobs, precisely the areas where automation is expected to strike hardest within the coming decade. The displacement of women from the labor force could be enormous, yet retraining facilities are largely geared to men. Retraining facilities for older women who account for the fastest growing segment of the labour force, are practically non-existent.

In adult retraining schools where many of the students are women - a high percentage of the mothers without husbands must drop out of school, and go back on welfare, because no provision is made for the care of their children. In this manner many mothers are effectively being denied the opportunity to retrain and become supporters of their families and welfare costs mount accordingly.

Retraining Opportunities

The facilities for the professional retraining of married women are inadequate. We feel that continuing education for wives and mothers needs to be given much more attention. In many cases women take the lead in community activities, youth leadership, etc. While we may not be able to place a price tag on all these activities in the areas of youth guidance and leadership, we have a measurement of value. One youth steered into worthwhile pursuits instead of criminal activities will save our country thousands of dollars - a fair price to place on the efforts of enlightened, educated women leaders. A well-informed wife and mother is better equipped to give the proper guidance and leadership to children, and to assume the responsibilities of a citizen. Enlighten the woman in the home and you enlighten her family and associates. The power of a woman can be far-reaching indeed, if properly directed.

We therefore recommend that the following measures be taken under federal jurisdiction, to alleviate some of the problems:

1. That day care services and foster home care be made available for children of working mothers in congested urban centres, and where otherwise justified, at a moderate fee, and that only qualified personnel be licensed to operate these facilities.
 2. That Canada's equal pay legislation for equal work be enforced under government supervision. To receive redress on unequal pay at present, the woman worker has to complain, and is often afraid to do so for fear of losing her employment.
 3. That professional opportunities be guaranteed to women who qualify in law, medicine, architecture, engineering, accounting, dentistry, real estate and school administration as an incentive to aspire to more prestigious jobs, and that training opportunities be made available to women interested in a career in such services that have always been considered traditionally male.
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Divorce Laws

If divorce is a tragedy in our society, so is the unhappy marriage which shows no hope of improvement. The fact that there

are an estimated 50,000 common law marriages in this country is evidence of the number of Canadians trapped by our obsolete divorce legislation.

Canada's divorce laws have long been due for reform. In welcoming the advent of the new legislation on divorce we do not in any way attempt to undermine the sanctity of marriage and the family in our society. We contend, however, that adultery is not the only valid ground for a divorce, and trust that compassion and understanding be shown to those Canadians who are shackled in unhappy and hopeless marriages. There are many other marital problems, some of a far more grievous nature, for which legal termination of marriage offers the best solution.

To the persons who believe in the Divine permanency of marriage, this change in the laws should not constitute an infringement on religious beliefs - they will be quite free to continue to honor their principles; at the same time, for the citizens with differing views, there will be a greater freedom to act as their conscience dictates.

The important issue with which we are concerned is that pre-marriage courses be made available, and be widely attended

before marriage can take place. In the past it has been too easy to get married, and too difficult to terminate those marriages which have broken down.

We believe that planned parenthood, practised with respect for human life, fulfills rather than violates the will of God; that it is the duty of every married couple responsibly to seek parenthood, avert it or defer it, in accordance with their wish, and in the best interests of themselves and their expected families.

Marriage is not an institution designed for procreation alone, but rather for the mutual sanctification and perfection of both the individual and the family group. Denial of contraceptives to those who wish to use them, enfringes on the rights of individual freedom.

Our society denies birth control information to those who need it most - the poor. Because they cannot afford the luxury of a private physician, the poor face a problem which the well-to-do can avoid:- having more children than they want, or can adequately support. We cannot ignore this problem. To do so is

is to favor the perpetuation of poverty, and ignorance, and large relief rolls. To be able to plan the size of their families would keep many people from requiring assistance.

While the sacredness of life is paramount, the by-products of excessive procreation, illegitimacy, desertion, non-support, mental and emotional instability and broken homes, can turn a moral virtue into an immoral situation.

We therefore favor the elimination of all restrictions and prohibitions against the dissemination of birth control information, and the rendering of birth control assistance by qualified physicians, clerics and hospitals, as a vital service to be rendered in the field of public health.

Further that full freedom be extended to all population groups for the selection and use of such preventive methods for the regulation of family size as are consistent with the creed and mores of the individual concerned.

The lack of this service has greatly contributed to the practise of criminal abortions, juvenile delinquency, desertions etc. There is substantial proof that those on welfare want birth

control information: that they do not subscribe to the adage "More children - more welfare aid".

Our government needs to awaken to the fact that family planning is a fundamental part of family health and welfare, and needs to be made available to all persons seeking advice. If our government can print advice on home canning methods, surely it could publish a brochure on contraception.

Taxation

Canadian taxation laws, as presently constituted, often render it unprofitable for married women to resume their careers. After meeting the income tax obligations, and the payment of a housekeeper, it frequently is not remunerative to seek employment.

A married man is obligated only to provide his wife with the basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing and medical attention. Many marriages become difficult because a wife is relegated into a humiliating position of having to account for every penny of her personal expenditures. In many cases no monetary value is placed on a wife's services as housekeeper, laundry woman, cook, baby sitter, or her other various contributions to the marriage partnership.

A divorced, widowed or deserted mother cannot deduct from her income tax the services of a housekeeper, baby sitter or nursery school which provides day care for her small children. Only if the housekeeper lives and sleeps in the home can such deductions be made.

This invariably creates a hardship as it places too great a burden on the one - parent household.

We further believe that when both the husband and wife are employed outside the home, and when domestic help is required for the household - that the wages paid out for such help be deductible from either the husband's or wife's income tax.

May we take this opportunity to draw your attention to an area in which we feel there is discrimination against farm women.

When taking the place of a farm worker in the field or otherwise, farm women cannot claim wages and her husband cannot deduct such wages from his income tax. Frequently during the rush seasons of the year competent farm help is not available. It would seem justifiable that if a farm woman is willing to assume a double work load, (that is to perform the household

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duties and the work that the hired man would perform) she should be able to collect wages for the farm labour, and to deduct that wage from the family income tax as it would be if it were paid to a hired hand.

We hope that these social injustices will be brought into clearer perspective, and that women in the future through the recommendations of this Royal Commission will be given greater recognition and the opportunity to develop their latent talents as citizens of Canada.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the

FARM WOMEN'S UNION OF ALBERTA,

Mrs. Paulina Jasman,
President

