

Stand up and fight!

By Mrs. R.N. Thompson

(Mrs. R.N. Thompson is the wife of the well known national political figure who is the Federal M.P. for Red Deer, Alberta. This editorial is a condensation of an address that Mrs. Thompson delivered last month.)

Day in and day out, on every hand, over and over again, we hear of what is wrong in Canada. True, there are many things to be changed, but that does not mean we do not have much for which to be thankful. Let us look at our great markets piled high with fruit and vegetables, miles of fruit orchards, harvests rich and ripe, great herds of livestock grazing in our fields. Yes, for us and our children there is abundance of food.

We see splendid hospitals, schools and colleges. Our handicapped are not left to shift for themselves. We see steps — not by any means adequate as yet — that suitable provision is made for the aged in low income brackets. We see unlimited possibilities in this land.

Perhaps we should think a little farther — out to the millions who hear and dream of Canada, but who can only dream — to those who know nothing but hunger, want and privation, where there are not adequate hospital facilities, education or the thousand and one things we take for granted.

Let us not take too lightly the heritage which has been passed on to us — the liberty to live, work and workshop as we wish. On Hay Island during the Revolutionary War, George Washington said to a group of weary broken men, after he had promised them nothing but more hunger, more cold, disease and death, "This liberty will look easy by and by when nobody dies to get it."

Is there a danger in Canada today of our forgetting that the liberty we enjoy was not easily come by? It was not to gain their own ends that many of our forefathers turned their faces toward this new land; but rather that they might establish for themselves, and for those who would come after them, the rights of free men.

What does this freedom mean to us? Does it mean freedom to do as we please? I think not. Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. We cannot but be involved in this freedom which was so dearly purchased for us. Surely for those who died in the defense of Canada, died for our freedom, we should sense the responsibility of carrying on that which was preserved for us at such a cost.

Now that we appreciate the past and live in the present, what can we as women do for the future of our land? As citizens

(Continued on Page 2)



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"Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you; shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left". — Deuteronomy 5:32.

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Vous veillerez à faire ce que Yahweh, votre Dieu, vous a commandé; vous ne vous en détournerez ni à droite ni à gauche. — 5:29 Deutéronome.

Stand up...

(Continued from page 1)

of this great land of Canada our responsibility is great.

What is the role of women in political action today?

As with anyone else, the role of women is the challenge to act thoughtfully and responsibly. People expect women to be flighty, prudish, irresponsible and liable to mob rule. Any concerted action they take is criticized as being either jumping on the bandwagon or being anti-male, or something like that. Signing petitions, criticizing this or that, brings out an adverse reaction.

Mind you, there is nothing wrong with getting an adverse reaction. Anyone who stands on principle and speaks out in favour of integrity, morality or law and order is going to draw a reaction. But it is important to fight on the right issues.

The CBC is a good case in point. Heaven knows the CBC needs to be challenged. We need to land on them with both feet for a lot of things they do. And we need to keep fighting until they take it upon themselves to be the voice of sanity and stability, or until the laws are changed by Parliament giving responsible public opinion a chance to be heard and heeded in public broadcasting. Is it too much to expect that our tax-supported public broadcasting system provide for our homes such programming just as pure as the water which flows from our taps? I think not!

I fully agree that much of CBC programming is inferior but to demand the removal of one program indicates that all other programs are acceptable. Does the demand to remove Festival from programming mean that you agree with everything else on the CBC? You don't like Festival, but Playdate is OK when it presents dramas glamorizing divorce and atheism; you don't like Festival, but Seven Days is OK when it ridicules the Pope and the national leaders; you don't like Festival but Public Eye is OK when it discusses homosexuality; Festival is bad but it is alright for CBC News Commentators to make snide remarks about U.S. foreign policy. Is that what we mean?

If we are to criticize CBC, let's come up with what we want. Let us study what other countries do to keep the responsibility for public broadcasting in the hands of the electorate. Let us put useful ammunition into the hands of our elected representatives so they can do the job we elect them to do. If all we do is complain, then we are just the impractical fuddy-duddies we are accused of being.

What is happening in the field of communications is of major importance in Canada just now. The number of countries in which the press and radio are free of political censorship is small enough. Irresponsible demands to stop this show or ban that magazine are just steps leading the way to government censorship.

We women are in the best possible position to evaluate the impact of communications in the country. Women buy most of the magazines. They listen to radio and watch TV more than their husbands do. They use what their children read and what they watch on TV.

First, we must ask ourselves whether we are part of the problem or part of the cure. Do we watch the good shows and turn off the bad? Do we buy the good books and keep the smutty ones out of our homes? Do we develop our children's taste for the finer things?

Second, we must take the positive approach and encourage the good. It is one thing to send off a letter burning with righteous indignation when the press or radio exhibit poor taste. But are we equally as quick to send a note of thanks for a good article or a show well done?

Third, when we unite to take joint action it must be backed up by thorough research and positive suggestions.

Now for a matter of growing concern in our Canada — and one which we should be busy about. In Canada today there are more than 700,000 working women. Granted that a woman should have equality with men insofar as employment is concerned but I am referring to the more than 300,000 working mothers within that number.

Should not a mother be in the home caring for her children? Juvenile delinquency is becoming a grave problem today. Why are these mothers working anyway? If it is not possible for the father of the family to provide for the needs of his family then perhaps there is need for some change in our economic system?

In closing may I share with you here some very personal thoughts — thoughts which were of great blessing to our family during the recent campaign. As is our custom about the breakfast table every morning, we were reading from the Scriptures — reading at that part of ancient Bible History when the walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt — 445BC.

Nehemiah had gone out to survey the ruins and then told the people of the plans to rebuild. When their enemies heard of this project, they laughed and made fun.

"But the people had a mind to work". They cooperated. They were zealous in the work. Are we?

Then the enemies began to make up untruths and tell falsehoods. Still the people continued to fill in the gaps and build up the wall. The enemies came again and threatened to fight — to destroy the completed work. But the people of Nehemiah became discouraged. And these words of Nehemiah are those I would like to leave with you — "Be not yet afraid of them: Remember the Lord which is great and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your houses."

Let us remember these words. We have a freedom to preserve — God-given freedoms — and, with His strength and wisdom, we must continue to fight.