

## 8. Pay Equity—Gender Gap

[Advance Copy - Subject to minor change before inclusion in Bound Volume.]

**8. CATHERINE DELAHUNTY (Green)** to the **Minister of Labour**: Does she agree that women workers are entitled to equal pay?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON (Minister of Labour)** : Yes. The law is clear: people cannot be discriminated against because of their gender, as it would be a breach of the Equal Pay Act and the Human Rights Act.

**Catherine Delahunty**: What is her response to the comments this morning of Employers and Manufacturers Association head, Alasdair Thompson, that women do not have equal pay because they take more sick leave because of their “monthly problem”?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON**: I am not responsible for Mr Thompson’s suggestion, but I do not agree with it.

**Catherine Delahunty**: Will the Government continue to take advice from a business leader who has just attacked the productivity of 50 percent of the workforce on the basis of their gender?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON**: I listen to the views of a number of people who say things I disagree with or find offensive. It is simply part of being in Government.

**Catherine Delahunty**: Does she agree that the sexist and ridiculous views espoused by business leader Alasdair Thompson this morning are proof that the Equal Pay Act needs to be modernised and strengthened?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON**: I am not responsible for his comments. I do not agree with his comments.

**Catherine Delahunty**: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I did not ask whether the Minister agreed with his comments; I asked whether she agreed that the Equal Pay Act needed to be modernised and strengthened.

**Mr SPEAKER**: I invite the member to repeat her question.

**Catherine Delahunty**: Does she agree that the sexist and ridiculous views espoused by business leader Alasdair Thompson this morning are proof that the Equal Pay Act needs to be modernised and strengthened?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON**: The mere opinion of one person on one occasion is not necessarily justification to have a review of the legislation.

**Catherine Delahunty**: How can women who are concerned that they might not be getting equal pay for equal work find out whether that is the case in their workplace?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON**: There are remedies and recourses under both the human rights legislation and the Equal Pay Act.

**Catherine Delahunty**: Given the difficulties of taking a case under the Equal Pay Act and the extremely small number of cases taken in the last 40 years, how can she ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON**: The legislation is there to protect women who feel they have been discriminated against. The procedures are there, and there is nothing to stop them taking that course.

**Carol Beaumont**: Can the Minister reassure New Zealand women that despite comments by close National Party ally Alasdair Thompson, they will not have to wait until they hit menopause to close the gender pay gap?

**Hon Simon Power:** I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. In relation to using those types of descriptors in the question, as far as I am concerned Mr Thompson's first association was with the Social Credit Party.

**Hon Rick Barker:** I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. We have observed Mr Thompson over a long period—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Labour has just lost its extra supplementary question. I was on my feet, and that was not a point of order. What is fair for the goose has to be fair for the gander. I say in relation to the question asked that it was unusual, but it was not unparliamentary, although questions should not make that kind of assertion. Would Ministers prefer I deprived their colleagues of the opportunity to have a bit of licence to give as much back as they receive? I do not rule out those sorts of questions, because Ministers hearing a question like that have pretty free licence.

**Hon KATE WILKINSON:** I have forgotten what the question was.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I invite the member to repeat her question.

**Carol Beaumont:** Can the Minister reassure New Zealand women that despite comments by close National Party ally Alasdair Thompson, women will not have to wait until they hit menopause to close the gender pay gap?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON:** As I have said before, I certainly do not agree with the ridiculous comments of Mr Thompson. I do believe in good, fair treatment for women, and I think there are protections under both pieces of legislation that I have already cited.

**Catherine Delahunty:** Will she consider adopting my amendment launched yesterday to the Equal Pay Act, which requires employers to report on gender pay rates in their workplaces and release aggregated information on gender pay to employees on request?

**Hon KATE WILKINSON:** I have not read the member's bill, so I have yet to form an opinion on it.