

in these appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada over and above those required of men in the search they made for a woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, there is no opening on the Supreme Court of Canada, so there is no problem at this moment. I have to tell the hon. member that when there was an opening not long ago, we tried to find the best qualified lawyer or judge available to fill that post on the Supreme Court. The candidate had to be from Quebec, and we did appoint a judge from Quebec. At that time we looked at the possibility of appointing a woman to that post, as we do always, but at the same time, when there is a vacancy, the best person to fill that position must be found. Unfortunately, the candidate whom we named at that time was better qualified than the women considered when we had to fill that position last summer.

Miss MacDonald: Madam Speaker, I always find it interesting that when the government refers to appointments of women, it uses the adjective "qualified", as if a woman somehow had to be better qualified for an appointment than a man. That is the attitude that the government takes. I should like to say to the minister that we are all interested in seeing women appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, and since the government on its own has not been able to find a suitable candidate among women for the Supreme Court of Canada, would the minister undertake to give to the House the assurance that he will now consult with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Business and Professional Women's Association, La Fédération des Femmes du Québec, the National Association of Women and the Law, and all other women's groups, to find suitable women candidates to be nominated to the Supreme Court of Canada so that we will see the male monopoly in the Supreme Court of Canada broken once and for all?

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, when there is an opening we will consider the best candidate available to fill that position, and if it so happens that that candidate is a woman, I will be the happiest man in the House.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S PROJECTS THROUGH OUTREACH PROGRAM

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. A minute ago he said with a straight face that the government was interested in "real issues" affecting women. Considering that the women's Outreach program has been extremely effective in helping women gain access to the labour market, and also considering that women have a much higher rate of unemployment than men, could the minister explain to the House why the government has cut the annual budget for this

Oral Questions

fiscal year of the women's Outreach program by some 25 per cent, if it is really interested in real issues affecting women?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's information is not quite correct. In the new estimates which were just tabled in the House, the budget for Outreach is well over \$11 million, which is a substantial increase over the last year. I would also point out to him, as I think I did to some of his colleagues during the time when they considered my departmental estimates, that we have frozen the allocation for Outreach in order to get a higher proportion of the money going to women's projects, and in the past year we have increased by close to 50 per cent the number of women's projects funded under Outreach.

At the same time, we have taken the Community Services Employment Program and funded over 100 women's projects in this country to provide direct employment to those programs, all of which was designed to give them a chance to develop innovative enterprises and activities directed at women's issues. I would like to have more, Madam Speaker, but under the restraints we have we are trying to reallocate the money for these projects and set as a priority the very important concern of women's employment.

● (1425)

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, I referred to the reduction in the proportion of Outreach funding going to women's programs. In that regard, specific Outreach projects have been cut at the rate of more than one per month so far this year. In this context will the minister, as a minimum and as an expression of the government's concern with women, especially women in the economy, guarantee that the government will restore all those Outreach projects which have been cut so far this year?

Mr. Axworthy: Madam Speaker, there seems to be some difference in understanding. I am indicating to the hon. member that we have increased the number of available Outreach projects for women's employment concerns in the past year, and have tended to increase them even more for the coming estimates' year.

Also, we have gone ahead and set up some experimental programs dealing with women's employment centres, providing them with their own department. It is my intention to use that as a model to establish those kinds of centres in major urban areas across Canada in the coming year. So, we have a plan in mind to provide more comprehensive and more extensive counselling in service programs for women in the employment field. I agree with the sentiment of the hon. member, and I think the sentiment is being fulfilled by the actions we are taking.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, I will not dwell on the first point. It was that the budget for Outreach projects in general has been increased but, as the minister knows, women's programs, as a percentage of the total budget, have been reduced. I will leave that. The minister has not denied