

nominal interest rates for small business. It might have saved that small business in Kingston and the Islands. Under the Conservative government taxpayers who employed their spouses in unincorporated businesses or on farms would have been able to deduct their spouses' salaries as taxable expenses. That is something that I personally wanted so much to see put through this House of Commons.

The Conservative government's policies were working toward lower interest rates and a climate of economic stability. This government has offered only the gimmick of floating interest rates. This, plus the statement that there will be no budget before May, not in May, perhaps not in June, perhaps not well into the year or perhaps never, given the statements of the Minister of Finance, means that businesses that do survive are faced with continuing uncertainty. In uncertain times we do not need a government that contributes to uncertainty.

Like the great majority of Canadians, I am deeply concerned about the political events throughout this country, but particularly in the province of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

I have lived the recent history of Quebec very intimately, often within the province itself. I feel involved in the political and cultural evolution of that province through friendship, admiration and belonging. As a woman in politics, as an ordinary Canadian, I feel involved but also worried because I simply cannot see a Canada without Quebec, the cradle of our country which remains an integral part of what we are and what we can become.

I simply cannot believe there are no cogent, lasting and equitable solutions to our national and constitutional problems, to our regional and cultural differences. It strikes me as folly that our quarrels should divide us to the point of there being talk of breaking up, particularly at this point in our history, in the history of the world, when unity and agreement are more important than ever, if not vital. But, Mr. Speaker, I am sure everyone in this House shares my feelings, and I trust that, together with the Canadians we represent throughout the land, we will find a way out of the impasse with greater understanding, will and tolerance. The alternative is simply no alternative at all.

[*English*]

The international scene as well raises the spectre of even greater problems than those we face domestically. In the field of foreign policy the government referred in the throne speech to what will be its new, "active" approach in this field. From what we have seen to date, sir, that active approach would be seen to be more one of retreat than of positive action.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Somnolence.

Miss MacDonald: The first thing which the government did was to reject the public review of foreign policy, a review that was well under way by the former government. Documents which would have served to stimulate discussion and provoke public debate had been prepared and they were ready for

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reference to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. The intent was that that committee would serve as a forum in which many Canadians who are interested in international affairs could make their views known, rather than leave foreign policy as the exclusive domain of a clutch of bureaucrats, academics and politicians.

● (1420)

Not only would this have been the first foreign policy review designed for participation by Canadians already interested in international affairs but, sir, as well, it would have served to heighten the awareness of all Canadians as to the many ways in which international events affect their whole lives.

A public foreign policy review—a public review—would have brought home to Canadians a sense of their inter-dependence on the global community. It would have shown that geography and resources can no longer isolate us from external events, something which Canadians have believed for far too long. It would have stimulated both public suggestion and personal response as to how we meet the challenges of the 1980s in an increasingly unsettled and troubled world.

Yes, these documents were prepared but they now lie unheeded in the Department of External Affairs. These documents which lie there trace the dimensions of change in the world in the last 35 years. They did it in three dimensions. They traced those changes militarily, economically and politically. In each of these fields, whether political, military or economic, the documents recorded the growing instability that characterized the decade of the 1970s, an instability which threatens to escalate in the 1980s. Regional tensions are becoming more acute; east-west relations are deteriorating and the north-south dialogue cries out for a solution. These are the issues we face in the 1980s.

What is Canada's role and responsibility as we enter this troubled decade? That is what those documents asked. That is the question posed to the Canadian public. That is what the parliamentary committee would have invited the Canadian people to debate. An active foreign policy such as this party had envisaged would have sought not only broad public participation but would have stimulated a better understanding, a greater receptivity of the contribution that will be demanded of Canadians to help prevent and defuse growing instability. Defence, trade, aid, international institutions, law of the sea negotiations, human rights, refugees—debate on all these important issues would and could have made foreign policy a much more exciting part of the lives of countless Canadians.

But that open public approach has been rejected by the present government. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), true to form, reinforced his restrictive and secretive approach to policymaking the other day when, in reply to a question from the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), he stated that we did not need defence or foreign policy reviews since such reviews had been carried out in the 1960s. Back in the 1960s! Of course in the 1980s another one is not required!