

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me speak for this party and this government. When we sign international conventions, we intend to follow up on them, and we do.

I can understand that question coming from a member of the New Democratic Party, because the New Democratic Party often talks about the importance of signing international agreements, for example, relating to trade. Yet, when those international agreements are honoured and a finding is made against Canada, the New Democratic Party asks us to ignore our international commitments.

Ms Langan: Answer the question about children, Joe.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): If the House of Commons allowed me to use the word "hypocrisy" that is what I would apply to that kind of behaviour.

Mr. Speaker: It does not. The hon. member for Ottawa West.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the President of the Treasury Board, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister.

Numerous reports and the government's own statistics show that if you are not white, male, and able-bodied, you do not have an equal chance to be hired, promoted, and fairly paid in the Public Service of Canada.

Now, with Public Service 2000, the government is planning a complete revamping of the Public Service in everything from staffing to front-line service and it is not paying attention to the issue of unemployment equity.

Why is the government going ahead with this major overhaul of the Public Service and not even listening to organizations, such as the Canadian Ethnocultural Council and others, who know what the problems are and how to fix them?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the record of the government in improving representations within the Public Service of women and

minorities is there and it is something all Canadians can be proud of. It is not as good as it should be. It is not as good as it is going to be. It is better than it was and we are making good progress.

As for Public Service 2000, I do not understand why the hon. member would be critical of this initiative which will help ensure that Canada has the kind of quality Public Service the country will need at the year 2000.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, if the minister honestly believes what he just said, it is appalling that he does not know the facts.

If you happen to be of a coloured skin, your chances of being hired in the Public Service of Canada are only 1 in 4, compared to an applicant whose skin is white. That is appalling. The government can turn a blind eye if it wants, but that would not be a wise approach.

Will the minister commit that the task forces of Public Service 2000 will not close out these people but immediately invite them in for their advice on how to fix the problems?

• (1500)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member was not implying that there is a built-in prejudice in the hiring process.

The Public Service that this government inherited had a very low percentage of minorities represented in it. We initiated a program and action to turn that around, and things are better than they were.

They are not as good as they should be, but it is improper—and I hope it is a mistaken tone on the member's part—to insinuate that somehow there is prejudice built in, a kind of prejudice that this government has put in deliberately. It is not there. There is certainly no deliberate action. We are taking all the action we can to overcome inertia and to ensure that the Public Service reflects the reality of this country.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister.