

Oral Questions

assurance that he will look at this, now that the matter has been settled—

Mr. Tobin: He can't bring back Labrador City.

Mr. Mulroney:—in a brand new perspective of giving to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador the type of settlement which they genuinely need and want with regard to the offshore?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I tried very hard last year to reach a settlement. We have made two good offers to the Government of Newfoundland, which it has rejected. I guess if it wants to talk, it should come with the solution to the problem. Of course I am willing to meet with them, discuss the problems, and try to find a solution. The only preoccupation I have is to make sure that these resources are developed as fast as possible, as orderly as possible, and to make sure that the economic benefit will belong to the people of Newfoundland first. Because if we can help the people of Newfoundland better their economic and social standing, Canada will be better for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: Chrétien for leader!

Mr. Chrétien: Again I urge the Leader of the Opposition, and the Hon. Member in the Opposition from Newfoundland, to tell Premier Peckford that the people of Newfoundland need a settlement and the political game is over, that it is the interests of the people of Newfoundland, not of the Government, which are at stake, and that Canadians want a solution. I was able to make a deal on the Constitution and on energy with the other Provinces. It is only with Newfoundland that I can never make a deal. It is a bit frustrating.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am very encouraged by the response of the Minister of Energy, and I commend him for it.

The Minister said in respect to the negotiations which must take place, and I believe I am quoting him accurately: "The resources should belong to the people of Newfoundland first". I believe that is a direct quotation. I commend the Minister on that attitude because I believe I can probably conclude from it that the Minister is sending out a clear signal to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, saying: "Come and meet me for early negotiations and I will not be hidebound by positions which I have taken in the past". Is that the position? If that is so, I encourage the Minister because this is genuine, co-operative federalism, and I urge him along that road. This will benefit Newfoundland and Labrador.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): I said, Mr. Speaker, that the benefit from the development of the resources should first benefit the people of

Newfoundland. I make a big distinction between these people and the Government of Newfoundland. The federal Government can administer the programs under federal jurisdiction which benefit the people of Newfoundland. The Supreme Court of Canada has given jurisdiction over these resources to the federal Government. It is not for me, therefore, to decide against the Supreme Court.

What we need is an agreement to make sure that the development of these resources benefits first the people of Newfoundland and, in doing that, all Canada benefits from such a deal. However, the decision of the Supreme Court is clear. It is now a constitutional reality that the offshore resources of Newfoundland are under federal jurisdiction.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

NEED FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMPLIANCE

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board, and I think it is suitably asked today on International Women's Day. I believe all Hon. Members of this House know that the track record of the Liberals in terms of words but not action is clearly illustrated in their approach to affirmative action for women in the private sector.

The Minister responsible for the status of women, just two years ago said that the voluntary program "is not even moderately effective". Since the Minister and his Government have had no problem instituting contract compliance for the six and five wage restraints, I wonder if the Minister would tell this House whether or not he is prepared to introduce contract compliance immediately so that all companies with over 50 employees, which are dealing directly with the federal Government, are required to have affirmative action programs for women in place?

Hon. Herb Gray (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, this is something which I think deserves to be looked at, not just by myself but by the Minister of Supply and Services, who is the Minister in charge of the government contracting and purchasing activities. However, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I feel I should make clear to my hon. friend that when it comes to affirmative action in the federal Government itself, the program we have in place is not just a voluntary one. We are extending across the Public Service, on a phased step-by-step basis, a very strong and effective program, covering not only women but also the handicapped and indigenous people.

Last Fall I announced a service-wide target to increase substantially the number of women in the management category. Therefore, we do not have a limited program in the Public Service when it comes to affirmative action. We have a strong and effective one, and I hope it will have my hon. friend's support.