

Government Orders

because of retrogressive and unconscionable labour practices.

Finally, if the Minister responsible for the Status of Women is not prepared to meet with these women to take up the cause of exploited women in the community of Powell River, there should be pickets in front of her office in West Vancouver as soon as possible to get the point through to her exactly what her responsibility is to women in Canada.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. As he knows I will be visiting his constituency tomorrow, not speaking to a gathering of his opponents. It is a totally different situation where both he and I will be together visiting a capital works project to be installed later right here on Parliament Hill. I want to answer his question directly. First of all, I thought the answer from the member for South Shore a few moments ago was totally inadequate. He said that this budget is not about the status of women, or something to that effect. I am paraphrasing here. I think that is wrong. This budget is about improving the livelihood of all Canadians, particularly those who need it the most. Of course, if you look at the hard reality, many women, particularly women with children and sole support women, are in serious financial difficulty in Canada. It is absolutely terrible and it is our job through budgetary measures to try and make their lives better. Therefore, I disagree with the statement that was made in that regard.

• (1350)

In terms of the actual bank in question, I do not know much about that bank. There are not too many branches of it in my riding. Generally, the banks in my own riding have a good record of employment of women. Perhaps it is the opposite of what it is elsewhere. There are a large number of bank managers in my riding who are women. Probably half of them are. If you include bank managers and assistant managers, there are a good number of them, perhaps close to half all together. Anyway, it is a significant number compared to other businesses. Therefore, it is not quite that bad in the constituency I represent.

I do agree with the member though that if a bank has been engaged in such practices as preventing people from having their legal rights recognized, it is absolutely awful to say the least. If other financial institutions in that area are going to pick up the slack when such an institution behaves that way toward some of its own customers, and after all many of those employees are customers and their families are also customers, it is to their own peril.

However, in the case of the employees it is not that easy. They certainly have my total and full moral support. I only wish that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, who is a member from that part of the country, so near, could at least invite those people to come to her constituency office, some 50, 60 or 70 miles away. I am sure those people could get in their cars, drive to Vancouver and meet the minister if she would make time available. That, as far as I am concerned, is the very least the minister could do. Meet with them and listen to them. Obviously, she should go beyond that and help them as well.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to take this opportunity to talk about this whole issue of court challenges. Government must continue to provide funds, not only to deal with the kind of matters just mentioned, but also to deal with official languages. As a member representing a francophone community outside Quebec, I view most unfavourably the cancellation of the Court Challenges Program.

The Secretary of State told us today that we could seek the help of the provinces. I will ask members opposite if they are prepared to entrust Don Getty with the job of defending the rights of Franco-Albertans for instance? It is that dramatic. That is what the Secretary of State told us to do in his speech today, or rather in response to a question from the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

This is also true elsewhere in the country, where several provinces do not allow francophones to manage their own schools. I suggest to my hon. colleagues opposite—I can see the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry and others—and I urge them to look into this matter and to help us, francophones outside Quebec, restore funding for this program because we do need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The period for questions and comments has now expired.