

Employment Tax Credit Act

31,000, 81,000 or 192,000 jobs. But certainly considerably less than half the jobs in this new job-creation program were created for women.

It seems to me that the combination of the employment tax credit program and the program which was announced in this House one week ago perpetuates the disadvantage which women face in the employment market in Canada. They represent approximately 45 per cent of the unemployed, and the sum total of the programs advanced by this minister contributes to that imbalance. They get less than their proportion of the share. I wonder if the minister is reconsidering any of those programs to make sure that women get their fair share of the jobs that he is creating.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, as we have seen in the past, the hon. member is not quite accurate in his use of the statistics. If he looks at the number of jobs created for women through the two programs announced and those programs which are ongoing such as Canada Works and the summer employment training programs, he will notice that over 40 per cent of the places being provided for are for women. In particular, we initiated special programs to provide for a breakdown of those barriers which inhibit the participation of women in the labour force, such as the program to provide incentives to employers in non-traditional work and in the community services employment program which will not only employ large percentages of women but will also provide support services in the child care field which will enable more women to come into the work place.

As I indicated when I announced those programs, if they prove successful, and because we are working on the basis of one half fiscal year, we will add additional funds if they seem to be the answer to that very important problem. In addition, I have also indicated to this House that we plan to take steps in the area of affirmative action, in the area of unemployment and others, to make it easier for women in the work place and to reduce the barriers. As soon as we have the opportunity to bring those matters before cabinet, caucus and Parliament, they will be introduced. I would remind the hon. member that we have been here for only three months, and we have already accomplished far more than his colleagues in their nine months in office.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Chairman, I want to begin by reminding the minister of some questions which we asked last week when this debate began. We tried to get from the minister the estimates which his department has made of the number and percentage of Canadians who will be unemployed in 1980. Since that discussion last week, the U.S. figures have come out. They indicate what most people knew and what I think President Carter had admitted, and that is that the United States is now in a major recession. The unemployment rate, and I am taking it from memory, was the highest ever since World War II, at 7 per cent. One million people joined the ranks of the unemployed in the last month in that country. The United States is our biggest customer as we are their biggest customer, and their recession will obviously be mirrored and

followed in Canada. Could the minister give the estimates of his department, or any other agency or department within the government, as to the prospects for the coming year in Canada?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, that is about the same kind of question which the hon. member for Calgary West asked. The answers are going to be about the same. The first is that, in the statement presented to this House, the Minister of Finance gave the kind of forecast that we could expect within the range of fallibility, that is as primitive as economic forecasting obviously appears to be, that we could, depending upon all of the mixtures in international and domestic conditions, expect the employment rate to be somewhat above 8 per cent in the next year. This conforms to the predictions and projections made by the previous minister of finance in his late, unlamented budget. That is guesstimating.

As we well know, the ability to project those figures into the future is a very uncertain ability. But if the U.S. economy continues in its very severe recessionary pattern, then we can expect to have certain impacts in this country that we will have to try to offset, which is what we are trying to do now in the initiatives taken by a variety of departments in this government.

Mr. Orlikow: When the Minister of Finance made his speech some weeks ago, the extent of the depth of the U.S. recession had not become evident. The estimates of the Economic Council, the Conference Board in Canada and several economic analyses had predicted that the rate of unemployment which has been running at 7.5 per cent of the labour force would rise in 1980 to 8.3 per cent. Just last week Wood Gundy predicted that unemployment would rise to 9 per cent. I suggest to the minister that if we are facing that kind of problem then all the programs proposed by his government will do very little to deal with the severity of the situation.

However, I want to raise a different aspect of the problem. Whether the rate be 8.3 per cent or 9 per cent for the country as a whole, what we have seen for many years in this country is that the rate varies a great deal from province to province and from region to region. The province of Manitoba, which the minister and I both represent, has a relatively low rate of unemployment. But certain groups, particularly our native people, have unemployment rates, not of 8 per cent or 9 per cent, but at least, for part of the year, running anywhere from 50 per cent to 90 per cent.

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The question I want to ask the minister is about the new objectives and the new attempts to be made by the government in the next year or two, to deal with the ever-increasing and more serious problem of groups of people with special problems whose numbers are growing at probably twice the rate of the population as a whole. The age group is getting younger and most of them are not equipped by our education or manpower training programs to find jobs on the reserves or in the urban communities. They are moving in greater numbers