

Oral Questions

great concern to the Government of Canada, and to the people of Canada. The Government of Canada has been in touch daily with Polish authorities regarding these matters. Our concern is based, not simply upon our interest in developments in Poland, but also upon the justifiable concern on the part of the more than half a million Canadians who are of Polish origin about the rights and liberties of their relatives and friends in Poland.

The Hon. Member for Edmonton East questions why we would meet with a Polish parliamentary delegation to this country.

That, Mr. Speaker, is a visit that has been organized under the auspices of your office and the auspices of the Speaker of the other place, and it is one that involves a visit to Canada by a Polish member of the Politburo who is active in the decisions being taken by the Polish Government at this time. Thus, it presents the Government of Canada, and indeed all parliamentarians, with the opportunity to express, directly and forcefully, the concerns of Canadians to a member of the Polish Politburo.

Certainly for the Government's part we intend to take advantage of that opportunity here in Canada to express our views very directly about what should be occurring in Poland, and I would hope that individual Members of the House of Commons who have the opportunity to meet that delegation will also take a strong and forceful position in relation to that situation.

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[*Translation*]

WOMEN

FREE TRADE—IMPACT

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): My question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Yesterday, Status of Women Canada published a report on free trade and women, which states that lowering tariff barriers for Canadian industries will help these industries compete more effectively on the U.S. market; and that women will benefit as far as employment is concerned. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how the Minister can claim this sort of thing, when we know that manufacturing costs less in the United States because the minimum wage is lower, raw materials are cheaper and production lines can be longer. How can the Minister justify this kind of statement?

[*English*]

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I was delighted with the report that came out yesterday showing that free trade is going to benefit the women of Canada. It is going to benefit them in a lot of ways.

One reason that manufacturing costs are lower in the United States is the opportunity to have longer production runs. Canadian manufacturing industries compete very well in the U.S. as long as they can get the size and the investment, and certainly free trade will be very good for Canadian women in the manufacturing industry. It is also very good for Canadian women as consumers.

Because of the reductions in tariffs, both in respect of American goods that go into Canadian manufactured products, as well as the Canadian manufactured goods themselves, costs will come down for consumers relative to what they would be otherwise. By way of example, for low income elderly single women, the estimates of the impact of the agreement show an annual savings of about \$155 to \$240, compared to what the situation would be otherwise.

The free trade agreement is good news for women both in terms of jobs and the ability to train for new opportunities. The service sector, where 85 per cent of women's jobs are, will grow under the free trade agreement. What could be better for women?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

REQUEST FOR FUNDS FOR RETRAINING FEMALE WORKERS

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): I gather from the Minister's reply that women as consumers might benefit, but I don't think women working in industries that will be most severely affected will benefit, because they will lose their jobs. We know that most of the latter are immigrants with little education and schooling. I would like to know why the Minister refuses, as she did in committee, to allocate funds for retraining and training women who will lose their jobs or will have to seek employment elsewhere. Could the Minister give the House the assurance that she is prepared to reconsider the answer she gave in committee and guarantee that funds will be available for the thousands of women who will lose their jobs? Will she reconsider her reply and give us those funds?

[*English*]

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out in committee, the Canadian Jobs Strategy has sufficient flexibility to train people, including women, for job changes throughout the economic system.

I went into some considerable detail on this in committee, and I suggest that the Hon. Member read my remarks in committee.

With the system we have in place now, some two million women require some kind of job adjustment every year. They either change jobs every year or leave the workforce to take a training program.

With the new opportunities provided by free trade there will be additional adjustments. Most will be positive. We have,