

• (1430)

What we are saying is we are going to open both our hearts and our doors in reasonable and thoughtful ways to enhance trade. By lowering barriers we create new wealth on both sides of the border, because we want Mexico and we want the other developing countries to have a greater share of industrialized prosperity and not less.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

Yesterday in Montreal, a Mexican labour leader said that working conditions for Mexican women employed in the maquiladoras were "inhuman".

Today the Prime Minister said it was in the interests of the people of Mexico to sign this free trade agreement. I have the following question for the Prime Minister: Is he sure that the standard of living of Mexicans will improve and that their salaries will increase now that he knows that the situation in Mexico is disastrous, especially where women are concerned? Will his government defend the women of Mexico and the women of Canada during International Women's Week and ensure that the free trade agreements will be fair to women and to the rest of Canada? I think the Prime Minister is not convinced the agreement will be a good thing for Mexican women.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, how blatantly paternalistic can you get? Why don't we let the people of Mexico make their own decisions? Why don't we let them decide whether they want to negotiate with the United States and Canada to become more prosperous and help Mexican women and their families take advantage of North American technology and resources?

Would the hon. member have had Europe exclude countries like Spain and Portugal, just because they were less prosperous? According to the hon. member's rules, the women of Portugal and Spain would have had no access to the rich markets of Europe. Nevertheless, the Europeans expanded their market to a total membership of 12, including Spain and Portugal.

As a result, these countries have substantially improved their standard of living. That is how it works. By

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eliminating tariff barriers and asking poorer countries to join, we make them more prosperous, and that is what we want. We want to help developing countries.

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[*English*]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

On February 28 the minister said in the House: "It is my responsibility and my duty to ensure that the laws and the policy of the Government of Canada conform to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms".

I ask the minister: How can she possibly justify staying silent while the government plans to overrule the Human Rights Commission on such a fundamental human right as equal pay for women?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, we did not plan to override the human rights tribunal. There was a disagreement on the interpretation of some documents that were requested from us.

For a period of five years we worked with the unions to establish our position, at the end of which we did put forward a massive amount of money to make up for pay equity. These documents were acquired or established with the understanding that they will be kept confidential. We asked the court to pass judgment on that and we intend to respect its decision.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister responsible for protecting the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for all Canadians.

The minister knows very well the shameful poverty among Canadian women precisely because of the kind of discrimination the government intends to perpetuate and the President of Treasury Board has indicated that it intends to perpetuate. Some 75,000 women are owed up to \$1 billion by the government. Many are poor, will remain poor, will grow old poor, and will die poor.

Will the minister say now that it is wrong to deprive the government's own employees of money they have earned?