

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### POVERTY

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Statistics Canada released the census today showing that after four decades of decline the birth rate in Canada increased during the last five years. That is welcome news.

However, the problem we face is that more and more Canadian children are being born into poverty. At last count almost 4 million Canadians were living below the poverty line. More Canadian children are born into families who are unemployed, on welfare, or have no child care.

When is the Prime Minister going to honour his seven and a half year commitment to proper child care in this country? Does he not understand that when children do not have proper child care the damage lasts forever?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I have already explained to the member exactly all that the government has done in the last year for children in Canada.

I hope she remembers it was not a long time ago that we put \$2 billion more over five years for low income workers in Canada. The Prime Minister signed the convention last December. We will be making an announcement in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Winnipeg and Vancouver about something else, what we call children at risk in Canada, which will total around \$3 billion by this government for children for the last three months. The Liberals never succeeded to do that much.

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made the promise seven and a half years ago. I would like to hear from the Prime Minister on his day care promise.

A lot of Canadians heard last week that Canada is the best place in the world to live.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**An hon. member:** Thanks to Liberal governments.

**Ms. Copps:** Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that reality only applies to Canadian men. According to the United

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Nations, once our treatment of women is included, we tumble to eighth place. Not only do we have a bad record on child care, Canadian women receive two-thirds of the pay of men, are caught in part-time jobs and are largely heading single parent poor families in this country.

The Prime Minister loves to talk about the number of women he has appointed, but the United Nations concluded that the vast majority of Canadian women face a dismal economic situation.

What is the Prime Minister going to do to ensure that Canada is the best place in the world to live, not only for men but for women too?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue the progress that has been made in Canada in respect of the search for equality for women.

My hon. friend is quite right. Canada does lead the world in some very important considerations, but there are other countries that do better than we do.

• (1420)

For example, some of the Nordic countries in regard to the disparities between men and women in terms of work and in the workplace, governments, public service, and the private sector and so on.

This disparity is unfair and we are working toward correcting it.

My hon. friend says that there is a prediction about a dismal situation for women in Canada. That is not accurate. That is not accurate at all.

In point of fact, family income has increased dramatically. Jobs have increased since 1984. Some 70 per cent, I believe, of the full-time jobs in Canada have gone to women. In a progressive way we are eliminating those disparities.

We have a long way to go, but I share my hon. friend's point of view that while Canada is ranked number one in the world by the United Nations pursuant to some objective criteria, there are others where we should improve very dramatically our situation including the one that she raised. We are working as best we can to make sure that Canada makes progress to become number one in that area as well.