

Oral Questions

He has just been forcing more and more Canadians on to the welfare rolls with those programs. The figures of Statistics Canada show that in Quebec, there are more families who live under the poverty line than anywhere else in Canada except in Manitoba.

Does the minister not realize that the Stats Canada figures are just confirming the growing food lines, the poverty lines, the hopeless and the homeless lines across this land? I ask the Minister of Communications—do not mix me up—the minister of employment—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Finestone:—what concrete, new measures is this minister prepared to announce today that might give one ray of hope to a Montrealer, to a Quebecer with these new statistics in front of them?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, again the hon. member refers specifically to the people unemployed and on welfare in Quebec.

She will be pleased to know that notwithstanding the opposition's strong resistance to trying to activate this passive money under UI, instead of paying people to do nothing at home, we are encouraging them, helping them get new training and upgrading their skills.

I know that Liberals have opposed this and are still opposing this, but we are doing it. Because we are doing this, we will be spending close to \$800 million this year in the province of Quebec trying to help these people retrain and upgrade their skills.

She says that this policy of the government has resulted in more people being unemployed. Last year my department helped 630,000 Canadians go through these training programs and we expect with the increase in the training money that we have brought forward, \$300 million, that we should be able to help more this year.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Madam Speaker, all this propaganda with no policy is why I mistook him for the Minister of Communications.

Community cultural groups have been reporting to me that there is the highest level of social tension ever being experienced in the centre of Montreal right now. The government's policies are drawing and driving more and

more Montrealers into poverty, and it is not prepared to announce even one new program.

I would like to know, does the minister not meet poverty and homelessness on his streets like I do along Victoria and Côte-des-Neiges? Will the minister listen? Could he tell me what he says to his constituents so that I can tell them the same story?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, for the information and edification of the hon. member, I need no lessons about poor people.

I come from northern New Brunswick. I come from Atlantic Canada and I have seen what these passive programs are doing to our people in Canada, in Atlantic Canada. We pay them money to do nothing on welfare and UI. We are trying to activate this money and we are being opposed every inch of the way by Liberals instead of standing up here and trying to help those people.

All they can do is call for more money, more taxes, a higher deficit.

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TRADE

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade.

Certain representatives of the Government of Saskatchewan have recently been critical of the amount of consultation that has occurred between the federal government and themselves concerning NAFTA and GATT.

Can the minister rationalize this accusation? Has there been meaningful consultation or is this accusation simply posturing for the top row of the chicken coop in the hallways of the Saskatchewan legislature?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, I am not sure how to characterize it, but there have been very extensive consultations on the NAFTA itself.