

Oral Questions

Mr. McLean: I have had a lifelong commitment to helping people, and it is in that context that I want to ask the Minister of Employment and Immigration about his job-creation plans. Women, young people and natives are the people who are most often unemployed in this country. Would the minister tell us how many jobs he intends to create for women, for young people and for natives? Could he tell us whether the numbers he will be using are targets that he will try to achieve, or will they be firm commitments in quotas which he will meet and which he hopes to exceed?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I should like to begin by complimenting the hon. member on the very important responsibilities he has. As one who shares those responsibilities on the government side, I would say that it is one of the most important tasks of members of this House to ensure that women receive proper, fair and equal opportunities in the work force.

Mrs. Bégin: Hear, hear!

Mr. Axworthy: In saying that, I would want to point out to the hon. member that he should recognize we are not, in the job programs we intend to announce, exclusively attacking the program in that respect, because there are already in place a number of programs available for those very groups about which he spoke.

An hon. Member: Don't make a speech.

Mr. Axworthy: We have major commitments under the LEAP program to help native people. We have major job-creation programs that are before the House in the employment tax credit program. There are substantial training programs where we have close to 200,000 people in the country being trained under federal government programs. A large percentage of those people are women, young people and native people. So there are already in place a number of very effective programs.

What we intend to do in our announcements is to supplement those programs to deal with special problems in the work place where we have identified them. If the hon. member can wait for a matter of two or three weeks, I think he will be able to see exactly how effective those programs are.

Mr. McLean: Madam Speaker, my question was: How many jobs? In terms of the context of developing this strategy in the next few weeks, and following his confirmation to this House of the appointment of the vice-president of the Liberal party, Lorna Marsden, to an advisory capacity on job creation for women, I wonder if the minister will now tell the House whether that appointment was taken in consultation with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women?

Mr. Lalonde: What about Pat Carney?

Mr. Clark: She was elected. You are not accustomed to people being elected in British Columbia.

Mr. Axworthy: Madam Speaker, I should like to point out to the hon. member that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women has a fair degree of independence. It is designed to provide advice to the minister, not necessarily working in reverse. Its advice is very welcome and is very helpful, but it sets its own agenda and its own priorities.

As far as the case of Miss Marsden is concerned, I think it is important to point out to the member that in previous periods Miss Marsden was the chairman of the National Action Committee in this country, one of the foremost pioneers in the area of women's rights, and is one of the foremost demographers looking at the labour market in Canada. It is upon those qualifications that she is judged, and I do not think anyone should be discriminated against just because they are a Liberal.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

INQUIRY WHEN AND HOW AMENDING PROCESS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

Mr. Serge Joyal (Hochelaga-Maisonneuve): Madam Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister.

In view of the commitment made last night in Montreal by the Prime Minister on behalf of the 74 Liberal members from Quebec, to begin at once the constitutional amendment process, can he inform hon. members how he plans to proceed; that is, does he intend to call a federal-provincial conference of first ministers or, as suggested by the hon. Maurice Lamontagne, will he establish a committee which would consolidate the various studies or reports now in existence or published in the past, and does he plan on launching this process even before the House adjourns for the summer?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the methods mentioned by the hon. member in his question are indeed among those that we are considering. I am unable to announce today which of these various procedures we shall choose or whether there will be others.

As for the second part of his question, I can assure the hon. member that decisions will indeed be made and steps taken before the summer recess.