

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INQUIRY IF GOVERNMENT HAS STUDIED PAYING EMPLOYERS' SHARE

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, that was not a very satisfactory answer. I shall direct my second question to the Prime Minister.

Since the reason given by the Minister of Finance for transferring this program was that he wanted to take some of the pressure off small businesses, could the Prime Minister inform the House whether he has considered having the Government pay the employer's share?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Hon. Member for her question. I think she will agree that answers to such questions would appropriately be dealt with in the Budget.

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WOMEN

PROTECTION OF PERSONS WORKING WITH VIDEO DISPLAY TERMINALS

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board. It concerns the Government's dealings with its own employees working with the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

The Council will not accept the standards proposed by the employees' union for the protection of persons working with video display terminals. Is the President of the Treasury Board now ready to assure this House and Canadian women that he will allow the Advisory Council to provide for those standards in the collective agreement for the protection of women?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the Advisory Council unfortunately has had very few meetings over these last twelve months. There was a meeting quite recently, and I have received recommendations to which I will respond in the weeks to come.

● (1440)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, that was an incomplete answer. Does the Minister recall that the previous Government, which did not have a very enlightened policy toward its employees, but was a little post-Dickensian, accepted such a clause and, indeed, a clause on technological change? Not a large number of people are involved, but the principle is very important.

Would the Minister agree that the Government has the responsibility to show some leadership in these crucial areas; that women who work for the Government should get the best

conditions; that we should work together to get them generalized, and that the Government should not be using the private sector as an excuse for very poor working conditions for women?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the Hon. Member that that is exactly what we are trying to do in all our relationships of that nature. We are trying to show ourselves as the leader in such relationships, and we will continue to do so. The issue is under active consideration. We will not try to use the Public Service as an excuse, but quite the opposite. We will try to give an example to a broad spectrum of Canadian businesses on how they should deal with these kinds of issues.

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FOOD AND DRUGS

BAN ON SALE OF HERBAL PRODUCTS

Mr. Ted Schellenberg (Nanaimo-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As the Minister is no doubt aware, over the past few months officials of the federal Health Protection Branch have ordered the removal of certain herbal products from sale. Can the Minister advise the House why the departmental officials undertook this action? Is there any consideration being given to permit the sale of these products pending the results of the advisory committee's recommendation?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, what the Hon. Member has mentioned is correct. The problem has developed with the Health Protection Branch and distributors of certain products, namely, that the products, in and of themselves, are distributed in other forms as well. That is where the first difficulty arises. But certain claims are made by some distributors as to the medicinal effects which those products have, which cannot be substantiated.

We have met with herbal distributors, including those in his home province of British Columbia, which resulted in the establishment of an advisory committee. That committee is expected to report between the middle to the end of September. There is no doubt in my mind that we will have to change some methods regarding the manner in which these products are approved. I thank the Hon. Member for the question.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

UN DECADE FOR WOMEN—ATTENDANCE AT CLOSING CONFERENCE

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. It concerns not the issue of part-time feminists, but vacation-time feminists.

We were shocked to learn last weekend, through the media, that the Government will send 10 Ministers, no critics and no