

S.O. 21

society. As one of my constituents so aptly put it, these women give a great deal of time, energy and money to churches, hospitals, and charities. These volunteers respond to a diverse number of community and national needs. In 1979 it is estimated that some \$3.5 billion in unpaid volunteer wages was contributed to Canada's economy.

In the Minister's request to have the spousal allowance dropped, she failed to take single parents into consideration. She has suggested a tax increase to single parents who claim the spousal allowance. Seventy-five per cent of the 1980 returns in which a spousal deduction was claimed came from taxpayers earning less than \$25,000, which is under the average Canadian family income.

We on this side of the House urge the Minister responsible for the status of women to abandon her suggestion to change the tax system and unfairly discriminate against childless couples and single parents.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

NICARAGUA—UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE TO DISSIDENTS

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Madam Speaker, it is a well known fact that the United States is currently carrying out covert action against Nicaragua. For a well documented report I refer Hon. Members to the cover story in the November 8 issue of *Newsweek*, as well as to *The New York Times* of December 3, 1982. They detail the aid the United States is giving to supporters of the previous Somoza dictatorship of Nicaragua, based in Honduras, in their attempt to overthrow the legitimate Government of Nicaragua. The action is causing extreme hardships for many innocent people along the border of Honduras and Nicaragua. Farmers and villagers are being caught in the crossfire, and the land, the most fertile in Nicaragua, is being left unused. I can personally attest to these facts having toured the area recently.

● (1110)

United States support is also having more profound effects on the whole area in that it is destabilizing all of Central America. Not only is Nicaragua being threatened, but Honduras is needlessly being brought into the conflict. Who will be next?

In view of the fact that the United States is sending 1,600 troops to Honduras next month to compete in military exercises within 15 kilometres of the Nicaraguan border, and that the conclusions of the subcommittee on Latin America recommended that the maintenance of stability in the area be the No. 1 priority of the Government of Canada, once again I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) to visit Washington and all countries of Central America, to meet with appropriate officials in the countries directly involved in the conflict and also in those countries which are trying to bring about a peaceful solution, in order to expedite an end to this precarious situation.

SHIPBUILDING

FRIGATE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM—CONTRACTS URGED FOR DRYDOCK AT SAINT JOHN, N.B.

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Restigouche): Madam Speaker, my intervention relates to the economy of the Atlantic Provinces, and specifically to the shipbuilding industry. I would like very much to join and support my colleague from Saint John in inviting the responsible Ministers, specifically the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne), on the subject of the proposed new frigate construction program, to give every consideration to directing that work to the drydock at Saint John, New Brunswick. We know of the efficiency and the excellent work that the employees of that drydock have been able to achieve over the years. In a recent meeting with Local 3, at their initiative this question was brought forward. I am very happy to have this opportunity today to invite all Hon. Members to support us in ensuring that, when this work is finally approved, contracts will be given to the drydock in Saint John, New Brunswick.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

DELAY IN PROCESSING OF CLAIMS

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) recently announced a new computerized labour force planning system which will chart industrial trends and match workers to jobs. I am pleased to see that the Minister is planning for the future, for a change, but I am also very concerned that little is being done to meet the immediate needs of the 1.5 million Canadians out of work today.

The computerized delivery system for unemployment insurance benefits is in sorry need of improvement. Unemployed Canadians are being forced to wait weeks and weeks for their benefits while their unemployment insurance claims are being processed. Many of these people are forced to go on welfare in order to survive through the interim period between their job loss and the receipt of their first UIC benefit cheque. I am told that when people receive welfare, while waiting for their benefits to be processed, their cards are pulled from the computer and processed by hand, creating yet a longer delay.

I am fully aware that the system was not designed to handle 1.5 million unemployed Canadians. I can fully understand why the Government could not foresee the problem developing, just as it was unable to foresee any of the effects of its disastrous economic policy. Foresight has never been an attribute of the Liberal Government. There is no reason why a person who has already suffered through the loss of his job should be forced to apply for welfare while waiting for his unemployment insurance benefits—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.