

SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister will know that 48.5 per cent of single-parents families headed by females are falling below the poverty line. These women have difficulty getting jobs, they have problems with child care, problems with health care, and problems that lead to suffering among the children. Does the Prime Minister have any specific objection to referring the issue of single parenthood to the Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare for examination and report back to the House, with recommendations? Does he have any specific objections to that kind of plan?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, of course I have no personal objections. I am not a member of that Committee but I think that this is a matter that should be dealt with through the Chairman of the Committee and the Committee itself. I have no idea what its current agenda is. If the Hon. Member makes representation to his own Members on that Committee I am sure they can arrange things in the usual way with the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, there has been some obstinacy at those meetings. We do not have such a Committee at the moment.

SUGGESTED ESTABLISHMENT OF PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, one of the issues that we thought might come out of parliamentary reform was the setting up of a few more permanent standing committees. It seems to me that the House and the women of Canada could benefit from a permanent standing committee to deal with women's issues. They have special problems in terms of the impact of high technology on their job situation, they have special problems with parenting, with retirement, health care and so on. Would the Prime Minister have any specific objection to setting up a new permanent standing committee to deal with women's issues?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, that is a singular request on the day when we are precisely voting on the setting up of these parliamentary committees. It is the first time in my memory that we have to vote on the creation of such committees. I am sorry that the Opposition has been dragging its feet, preventing us from getting ahead with this business to the point of calling it to a vote this afternoon.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

CANADA-UNITED STATES TEST AND EVALUATION PROGRAM

TESTING OF CRUISE MISSILE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Last week the Minister tabled a framework agreement signed by Canada and the United States which covered or laid down certain conditions for the testing of certain weapons, including the Cruise missile, on the assumption that such tests actually take place at some point in the future. On Friday in the House the Secretary of State for External Affairs said the following:

There is no understanding beyond what was tabled.

I would like to ask the Minister to be more precise on that today. More specifically, had the Government or the Prime Minister made a commitment in principle to test the Cruise missile prior to the reaching of the agreement which the Minister tabled last week?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Madam Speaker.

CABINET DECISION—MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, in view of that very interesting reply of the Minister, I should like to ask the Prime Minister the following question. Last April 29, in reply to a motion which I moved on behalf of my colleagues in opposition to the Cruise missile, the then Secretary of State for External Affairs said in the House that President Carter had requested Canada to test the Cruise missile system. He went on to say:

This request has been accepted by the Canadian Cabinet.

Further on the Minister of Justice added these words:

The decision to go ahead with that has been taken. What is being held up is the implementation of the decision which has already been taken.

Who was misleading the House? Was the former Secretary of State for External Affairs misleading the House when he said that last April, or was the present Secretary of State for External Affairs misleading the House when he answered the way he did today?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Secretary of State for External Affairs answered the question as I would have. I can assure the Hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party that there is no misleading of the House in that. The agreement with the United States, the request which was made of us, concerned a weapons testing agreement, the Cruise being one of the specific instances of weapons which could or could not be tested under that agreement.

In so far as President Carter's request referred to by the Leader of the New Democratic Party is concerned, I have not