

Supply

I should like to bring to the attention of the minister the kinds of boards and commissions I am talking about, such as Air Canada, the Bank of Canada, the Canada Labour Relations Board, the CBC, Canadian National, the Canadian Transport Commission, the National Energy Board and Petro-Canada. In all of these, decisions are being taken which affect our communications, our transportation systems, our finances, our energy supplies and our economic strategies. These are decisions that are being made without adequate representation from one half of the population of this country.

Three of the eight agencies I mentioned have only one woman sitting on their boards. They are Air Canada, the Canadian Labour Relations Board and the National Energy Board. The other five I mentioned have no women on their boards at the present time. They are, the Bank of Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian National, the Canadian Transport Commission and Petro-Canada. There are no women on the boards of these very important agencies which are directing much of the decision-making of this country.

What I should like to ask the minister is this. Since this is another whole area where the federal government has the opportunity to move and where he as minister responsible for the status of women has a great opportunity to provide input, how many of these Crown corporations or federally-tied companies are committed now to affirmative action programs?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, I thought the hon. member was going on to another line of questioning, but I see she came back to the actual affirmative action issue. I can tell the members of the House—I do not know if it is public yet but I am sure they would not mind my saying—that we have already signed an agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to establish an affirmative action program. The president of that corporation and the minister responsible have been very co-operative in coming together. Since we have undertaken the activity with the public service, they have now agreed to this in that major Crown corporation as a first step. I have also written letters to several of my colleagues who have a number of Crown corporations under their jurisdiction indicating to them an interest to negotiate with them.

As the hon. member may know, within our own Department of Employment and Immigration we have a separate section working with the private sector to develop affirmative action programs with private companies and with Crown corporations. These are being negotiated right now. For example, they are negotiating one with the government in my own city of Winnipeg, on the same premise.

In the area of Crown corporations we are attempting to make some progress and are negotiating to get these agreements signed, although it does take some time to explain to them what the opportunities might be, how the affirmative action programs in fact work and how to get decisions by their board of directors or by their other chief executives. This is something we are pursuing.

Miss MacDonald: May I suggest to the minister, who has been making such a great thing about a search for a Canadian in a certain other occupation, that he take that approach with the president of Petro-Canada, with the chairman of the National Energy Board, the president of the CBC, the president of Canadian National Railways and with a good many Crown corporations. I can assure him they would not have to search nearly as hard to find a number of women who have the ability and the clout to provide the input necessary on these boards. The minister responsible for the status of women should give these commissions very direct guidelines to go out and search immediately for women to become members of the boards of these Crown companies and government agencies.

Just one final question on a different matter, a matter that I know is of great concern to many people across this country. I want to know if the minister is approaching his provincial counterparts to discuss the upgrading of work standards for domestic workers in this country, especially those who have recently immigrated to Canada and where the work situations in which they find themselves are anything but adequate.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, in respect to the last question, I have written to the provincial ministers of labour outlining the position of our government. We feel that the labour codes should be brought up to standard and applied to domestic workers who come from offshore. The position of this government is that we would not agree to issue work permits until we gain some assurance that the working conditions for someone coming to work as a domestic would be comparable to those offered to a Canadian. That is not always possible to administer because so much of the labour activity is beyond our jurisdiction. I have written to the provincial ministers about that and we are in discussing holding some kind of conference this year, and we will certainly put that item on the agenda.

● (1740)

Mr. Foster: Mr. Chairman, the estimates of the Department of Employment and Immigration before us today certainly give us an opportunity to raise a wide range of questions concerning this department. The programs operated by this department are very important to the slow-growth areas of the country. I think especially of programs like Canada Works, LIP, the youth employment program, LEAP and a large number of other training-related programs which have a definite effect on the slow-growth areas of our country, especially those requiring direct job-creation programs.

In my constituency these programs have had a more visible impact on rural communities than perhaps any other federal government program. Their impact is visible in terms of improved housing for Indian bands, new halls and recreational facilities and docking and marina facilities in a large number of communities. There are programs for new firehalls, new community halls and facilities for senior citizens. There is also a large number of recreational programs. I think we have reached a certain limit, however, with respect to community