

Although this human resource is one of our strengths as a nation and of our economy, for too many years the talents and abilities of Canadian women have not been fully used. One measure of this is to be found in the fact that although women account for over 39 per cent of our labour force, they also make up about 47 per cent of our unemployed. Moreover, women frequently suffer from job segregation and low wages when they do start to work.

Such barriers are gradually being removed and my department is embarking now upon a major campaign to speed up the process. We are encouraging women to train for all kinds of jobs, including many which for too long have been regarded as male preserves. A good idea of the potential of this exercise can be seen at such projects as Syncrude in Fort McMurray, Alberta, where women in hard hats are an integral and essential part of the work force. That is the sort of thing we are going to see in this country.

Those of us who have had good fortune and good health too often forget not only the problems but the employment difficulties of those who are physically or mentally handicapped. These must be brought to the fore. We cannot continue to shunt occupationally handicapped persons to employment outside of the mainstream of Canadian life. The new programs must and will make provision for their employment in meaningful jobs in the private sector.

Although there are no accurate statistics which fully describe the labour market situation of Canadians of native ancestry, our experience clearly indicates that the problems they face are serious indeed. The disproportionately faster growth of the working age population of native youth, together with structural factors such as low levels of educational attainment, limited job skills and geographic isolation, contribute to all these problems.

I would like to emphasize the role that affirmative action can play in helping to ensure that women, natives and the physically disabled obtain a representative share of jobs within a company or organization. Affirmative action, which is a relatively new approach to this problem in Canada, involves an employer developing a comprehensive, results-oriented plan to remove those employment practices which act as a barrier to these groups but which are not work-related.

Already eight medium and large-sized Canadian firms have recently agreed to develop affirmative action plans with my department, and I understand another 12 agreements are under negotiation. This is all as a result of effective action by officials in Canada Employment and Immigration since June 4 who are working together with the private sector to achieve a worth-while objective.

In January, the government and cabinet will be reviewing the effectiveness of the present voluntary approach in terms of federal contractors; that is, people who want or already have contracts with the federal government. This review will be with a view to ensuring compliance with the affirmative action concept and ensuring that compliance is widespread. Whatever decision is taken by Cabinet in January, I can assure this House and the people of Canada that affirmative action to

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reduce systematic discrimination will be a major priority of this government and will be most vigorously pursued.

On Tuesday evening the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) indicated in his budget speech that my department will be launching a number of new initiatives to stimulate the creation of additional jobs and to help individual Canadians obtain meaningful and rewarding employment. I would like now to describe generally these initiatives and the principles upon which they are based.

● (1710)

It is, and must continue to be, the private sector which generates most of the real employment opportunities in this country. It accomplishes this as a by-product of producing the goods and services which people demand through their purchases. In other words, the priority objective is production of goods and services with a real economic value, rather than make-work job creation.

The aim of start/stop programs such as the local initiatives program, OFY and Canada Works, may well have had some validity in the early 1970s when unemployment was seen—wrongly, as it turned out—as a short-term phenomenon which could be treated almost entirely by temporary palliatives. The Liberal concept is to take a gob of money, throw it at job creation and somehow everything will be all right in the long run. To continue with an emphasis of this kind when it is obvious that short-term or easy solutions are not the answer to the problem of unemployment would be irresponsible. Such programs discourage the kind of mobility needed in the labour force and generate dependencies on government support programs in general. They also divert attention from the need to find more permanent solutions to chronic problems. I am convinced that our intention to move towards longer-term solutions by recognizing the primacy of the private sector when it comes to generating real and truly productive jobs is fully in accord with the preference of all Canadians for regular and secure jobs.

[*Translation*]

Far be it from me to suggest that the private sector alone is responsible for ensuring that there are enough jobs for all those who want and can work. It is indeed clearly the responsibility of the government to provide the required parameters, and to be the prime mover in the creation of jobs. All in all, what I am talking about is the necessity of real co-operation among government, employers and labour.

Mr. Speaker, over the last few months I was most impressed to see that the representatives of employers as well as labour and all levels of government have a very positive determination to combine forces to define the problems and work towards solutions. In such a spirit of co-operation, the government can and must act in at least three areas. First, we intend to help establish a social and economic climate conducive to the prosperity of the private sector and to help that sector take initiatives that will produce permanent jobs, as provided for by my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) in his