

Supply

require. That is another area in which we are taking a major step.

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct three questions to the Minister, if I may. First, does he feel that the six and five program has borne more heavily upon men or women? Second, is the women's Affirmative Action Program of his own Department in the action stage or in the assessment stage? Third, could he tell us how the 1.5 million to two million unemployed Canadians break down in terms of sex; more women or more men?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes remaining I would like to point out to the Hon. Member that the six and five program has had a very dramatic and positive impact upon the employment of women. The hundreds of millions of dollars we were able to realize from that program were re-allocated into direct employment programs which have put many people back to work, including a lot of women.

On the issue of Affirmative Action, we decided very clearly that it was important as a way of demonstrating to society at large that the Public Service of Canada must incorporate and implement its own Affirmative Action Programs before it could ask them to do the same thing.

We are not moving into the action stage. We have completed the first two phases of that Affirmative Action Program. A full assessment of numbers has been done, the comparative figures in terms of the work force, across the board in the Department of the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal), in Treasury Board, my Department and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The program is now in the implementation stage. I believe the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) has a number of new proposals to expand substantially the program, but they are really within his responsibility. I do not want to interfere. I believe in that particular area we are supplying another initiative to show how we can bring down work barriers.

On the question concerning the division of the unemployed, it is not a simple division between men and women. I believe the group most seriously affected by the recession, the group about which we should be most preoccupied, is young women. They are the ones who are most dramatically affected by the lack of jobs at the present time. This is why Members of my caucus and myself have been working very diligently to try to provide a new youth employment strategy. I hope we will have an opportunity to present it to the House in very short order.

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that I have just returned from British Columbia where there were a number of very successful and moving meetings of women's groups over the weekend in celebration of International Women's Day. At this time I would like to pay tribute—and I am sure that I speak on behalf of all Members of the House—to the many active women's groups across Canada that are working within their own membership and forming coalitions with each other to work for change in this country. I am sure most of us in the

House have profited by the information and the lobbying they do so effectively.

In Vancouver the theme was particularly appropriate. The theme they were using this year was: "Hard times won't stop us". If ever there was a need for that theme and that kind of objective, it is during these very hard times which are affecting women in particular.

We are proud of the women of Canada and their accomplishments. We are not so proud of the accomplishments of the Government or of the House. Over a century ago working women first protested cruel working conditions, miserable pay and the hard hours to which they were condemned. Their sisters 75 years ago started the demand for bread and roses—bread which was for economic security and roses for a better quality of life. I think we would agree that we still have a long way to go in reaching true equality in both the bread and roses sense.

This past year there were a few symbolic gains. The first women judge was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada; only one out of seven of course. We have 16 women out of approximately 282 Members of Parliament; certainly that is far from what we all want to achieve. Also we can be very proud of the role women played in insisting that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms must guarantee equality for both male and female persons, and for the skilful organization and lobbying and the persistence which twice brought women to Ottawa, with no funding, to help change the provisions of the Charter of Rights in their favour.

The annual lobby of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women is another very positive and effective tradition which is developing. We will be hearing from women across Canada very soon. Close to 200 organizations will lobby on behalf of equity for women. However, when we look at the facts, in particular when Canadian women look at the facts, we agree that the status of women in Canada in 1983 is a national disgrace.

The figures indicate that two out of three elderly women live in poverty and that nearly 50 per cent of all single women are poor. This includes younger women as well as women in their middle years and pensioners. This is increasing every month as more women are left on their own when they are separated, widowed and divorced. Statistics show that most poor families are headed by women. These are mothers who have been left to raise children on their own. Their numbers are increasing every month. Included also is the very serious increase in the number of teenage pregnancies and young teenage mothers who are keeping their children and will probably be on welfare most of their lives.

We protested strongly the Government restraint Bills because they imposed a very unfair burden on women, in particular the six and five restraints on the very low salaries paid most women in the Government service, on family Allowances and, of course, on pensioners, most of whom are women with very minimum standards of living.