

*Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a question to the minister about another aspect of her speech. She says Canada is the best country in the world to live in and anyone can enjoy it. As far as I am concerned, I see things differently. Overall, it is true that Canada is well positioned among western countries, but there are groups in our society which are less fortunate than others and the government should try to improve their situation.

I would like to draw your attention to the aboriginal people. Given the statistics on suicide, alcoholism and various other social problems, I wonder if the best way to help aboriginal women would not be to thoroughly examine the relationship between the natives and the federal government and to review, or discard altogether, the Indian Act, in order to put an end to the shameful way Canada has been treating native peoples over the last century.

[English]

Ms. Blondin—Andrew: Mr. Speaker, I am really quite pleasantly surprised to hear the member opposite speaking about the rights of aboriginal people.

It is no secret that I have been very outspoken on the rights of aboriginal people. I am also quite pleased, as was the rest of the country and the House, that the only department that is experiencing growth, even though it is not enough to meet the increase in demand and need, is the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

I am also quite pleased, on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, to note that there is a major devolution and dismantling process under way. Something is definitely happening. As an example, an agreement was signed in Manitoba. That is just one area but there are other sources of self-empowerment.

The government has a whole section on self-government. There have been major comprehensive land claim deals signed with the Yukon, a number in the Northwest Territories and also in the province of Quebec. Those are the real empowering sources on which the government has taken an initiative. It is not just this government but other governments as well.

We are not turning away from the people who are the most vulnerable, at risk and disadvantaged. We are there for those people.

We understand that we can do business in a much more effective and efficient way. The Canadian public agrees and is ready for that. In a sense, we are catching up with public thinking on this. I am sure the hon. member will recognize that in doing so we will not turn our back on the people who really need our help.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Québec for having introduced this most important motion in the House this morning. I especially like the part of the motion which refers to: “—inaction regarding the adoption of concrete measures to promote the economic equality of women in federal areas of jurisdiction.”

Would the Secretary of State for Training and Youth be prepared to make a commitment before the House this morning that she will take steps at the highest levels of her party to ensure that women will not be affected more than men by the 45 000 job downsizing over the next three years?

● (1120)

She said earlier that women accounted for 52 per cent of the Canadian population. Will the ratio be higher than 52 per cent when those 45 000 civil servants lose their jobs? Will there be many more women than men among those people?

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin—Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board is the minister who has that responsibility. I feel he has an eye and an ear to all of the dynamics of balancing on gender the concerns of the people who will be reduced from the work force there. He is considering all the dynamics. I would not even try to improve on the excellent job the minister has done.

I am sure he has a special concern about the view that government has toward the role of women in everything we do. Of course I have support for women in all areas, not just this area, as my colleagues do, some of whom are male.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this issue today. I wish to preface my remarks by saying that although I will not be in complete agreement with my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I believe it is important for all of us in the House to have the opportunity to debate.

It is through debate and discussion that ideas evolve to make for a more effective environment, especially when we are looking at this whole area of the ongoing evolution and devolution, shall we say, of those issues that are particularly important to women as they become more a part of society.

I would like to compliment the minister for youth and training for the philosophical eloquence with which she addressed this issue. My approach is going to be somewhat different because we were asked to assess the impact of the Liberal budget on the whole of society and that, of course, includes women.