

*Oral Questions***ENERGY****SUPPORT URGED FOR SOLAR INDUSTRY**

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, the fate of Canada's solar industry is soon to be decided by Members of Cabinet. After reviewing the industry's present status and potential, Cabinet Ministers will have to establish the level of funding the solar industry may receive for the next five years. I strongly suggest that federal Cabinet Ministers show complete support for the solar industry and continue funding at least to equal the present level of spending.

In particular applications, solar energy can be cheaper than convention sources. The Cabinet discussion paper prepared on this topic concludes that "over a five-year period, aggressive pursuit of lower price/higher performance systems by both industry and Government can achieve commercial cost-effectiveness. This is realistic but challenging."

Price performance goals cited in the discussion paper put solar energy below the consumer price of competing energy sources such as oil, natural gas, and electricity, in most parts of Canada. The only exception is in the prairies where natural gas is less expensive.

I appeal to the federal Cabinet to show support for the solar industry by continuing funding with the intention of advancing the industry to a state of independence.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN**REQUEST FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE TO STUDY WOMEN'S ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. One of the problems in this House seems to be in getting the Prime Minister to take an interest in those who are out of work or on welfare, particularly those living below the poverty line. According to recent figures, some 46.8 per cent of those people are single women.

In spite of his musings that the poor are getting richer, would the Prime Minister agree to establish a special committee to examine the situation of single women, and the conditions in which they find themselves, which suggest that they are totally inappropriate to Canadians in 1983. I refer particularly to those families that are headed by single women which, according to the same figures, comprise some 42 per cent of single women.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition seems to be labouring under a misapprehension. He should refer to what I said the other day. I never said that the poor were getting

richer; I said the poverty line was a moving line and it was traditionally going up in Canada. Therefore, the premise of his question being wrong, I take it that I do not have to deal with the question itself.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, that answer is totally inadequate, particularly in light of the percentages of single women who are living below the poverty line and trying to put meals on the table for their children. I would point out, with respect to the Prime Minister's previous comments in this regard, that we are not speaking of average incomes but of a subsistence level beneath which the average family, living below the poverty line, cannot meet its needs, particularly those families with young children.

PLIGHT OF ELDERLY FEMALE PENSIONERS

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, will the Prime Minister not establish terms of reference for a special committee to examine these matters and, at the same time, address itself to considerations of elderly female pensioners who are living in conditions that can only be described as intolerable? I can assure him that there are very few in that category who are spending their winter holidays in the Caribbean.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition takes a swipe at his predecessor, who obviously was spending the last week in the Caribbean. I do not think that is fair comment from a seatmate of the former Leader of the Opposition.

As far as a parliamentary committee is concerned, Madam Speaker, the new Leader of the Opposition has a new House Leader. He knows that questions on setting up parliamentary committees are usually discussed between House Leaders. I am sure that our House Leader would follow that course if the Hon. Member wants to follow it.

POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, can the Prime Minister tell us whether he has any personal objection to setting up a special committee of this House to look into specific problems of single women in this country, before he is off to St. Lucia?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No specific objections, Madam Speaker, beyond the general difficulty that House Leaders meet when there are too many special committees set up, all to deal with pressing and urgent problems; the House becomes impossible to manage in such circumstances. I am sure his new assistant as House Leader will be able to negotiate his way through some of these things with or without the help of the new Leader of the Opposition.