

Oral Questions

work of equal value, so that people, especially women, are not so adversely affected when these sorts of situations are forced upon us.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

EQUALITY—RESPECT FOR WOMEN'S NEEDS

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In his Budget speech, the Minister of Finance announced the creation of a new job strategy targetted at women who want to return to the labour force. Could the Minister assure the House that she will respect the needs of women in her new program, contrary to what she has done in Bill C-62 dealing with employment equity?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand the question.

[English]

Bill C-62 is before the House for debate. I trust that the Opposition will give support to employment equity. When the Hon. Member was the chairperson of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women I know that she did not put forward any proposals for employment equity. At this point I would urge her to move forward, to progress, to come into the real world, and to support programs which give women a chance.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY—MINISTER'S COMMITMENT

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, I wish simply to emphasize that the Government has turned down all the amendments that the Liberal Party had proposer to this Bill. Could the Minister, and I hope she will listen to and understand my question because she failed to answer it the first time around, could the Minister assure the House that she will not implement a new job strategy program if women as a group do not feel that this program meets their requirements? That is quite clear!

[English]

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as part of the Canadian Jobs Strategy, which started in September of last year, there was a particular program which was directed toward women re-entering the workforce after having been out for a number of years. I have had a chance to visit a number of these projects across the country. This morning, at a meeting with representatives from womens' organizations, I had a chance to talk about these projects. I was told by all that this is a very excellent approach to take, to help women get back into the labour force. I wish the Hon. Member would—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

FREE TRADE WITH UNITED STATES—IMPACT

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Canadian women have denounced free trade with the United States because of the major disturbance it is likely to create for women employed in the service industry. Does the Minister think it is fair to open up without adequate protection this area where 80 per cent of workers are women?

[English]

Hon. Walter McLean (Minister of State (Immigration)): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Hon. Member for raising a question on which I have had a number of representations from womens' groups across the country. I wish to suggest to the Hon. Member that I think the women of Canada have a lot of faith in the future of the country. They also recognize that, as we enter into discussions, we are doing so because those most vulnerable at the moment, in terms of these fluctuations, tend to be women who are ghettoized in many jobs. I have had conversations with Mr. Reisman and the Minister for International Trade. I have been pressing them to see that within the negotiation team there will be a person or group particularly designated to see that the interests of women, who tend to be the first affected, or who are in vulnerable jobs, will be protected.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I hope that person will, in fact, be a woman.

REQUEST THAT STUDY BE MADE PUBLIC

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister guarantee that the study with respect to the impact of free trade on women being undertaken by Labour Canada will be made public and discussed directly with women representatives of the banking, insurance, communications and other service industries affected?

Hon. Walter McLean (Minister of State (Immigration)): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member that the discussions which are undertaken, and the mandate of those negotiating, will be to be in touch with those who are particularly concerned. Obviously there has to be a dialogue. If at the end of the day there is an agreement that is good for Canada, it will be because there has been a discussion and an agreement in the interests of all Canadians, particularly women.