

Supply

lectures from that side of the House which led this country absolutely into debt.

Mr. Raymond Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Madam Speaker, I have just a short comment. The concern respecting regional development that I would like to explore with the member who just spoke is the matter of cutting 100 per cent of the funding for women centres.

Again, I return to the Campbell River and District Women's Resource Centre that offered programs to help women get back into the workforce, women who had been out for many years, through re-entry programs, training programs and retraining programs. This women's resource centre ran counselling and referral services. It was involved in assertiveness training programs, as well as a whole host of other opportunities for women to go back into the workforce, to make basically the entry into a job, to get women out of job ghettos, and to fight for equal pay for work of equal value.

• (1640)

This women's resource centre was a credit to the community which along with other women's resource centres across the country provided an effective, important service to 50 per cent of the population, especially in rural and remote communities like Tahsis, Gold River, Zeballos, and Bella Coola. These are important organizations that should be fostered and developed with core funding to an adequate level and also program funding. The Minister of National Health who is sitting here could be an important agent in that program funding.

How can the hon. member sit in this government and justify the kind of cuts that have happened to the women's resource centre, a national women's organization, and still speak about the record of this government in regional development?

Mrs. Sparrow: We certainly do not target out small areas, whether they be in the north or in the south. I can assure the hon. member that getting women back into the workforce is indeed extremely important.

We will do this with the training centres and by co-operating with the provincial governments. We have not let those people down. This government has and will continue to diversify and support the regions whether it

be western Canada, Atlantic Canada, northern Ontario, or north of 60th parallel.

Mr. Raymond Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Madam Speaker, I would like to refer to a point which is held very strongly by the New Democratic Party. I am afraid that the government has recognized the problem that it has created in the regional development issue. I refer to the question of the cut-back to women's organizations and link it to a serious impact on regional development. In the area I represent on northern Vancouver Island and on the coast of British Columbia, most communities are in fact resource based communities and a great many of them are very small, single industry towns.

For example, when a family moves into a single industry town with, for example a pulp mill, the male member of the family goes to work and the woman stays in a trailer with a couple of children and there are no opportunities or very few opportunities for employment. Most of the opportunities for employment that crop up are very low paying, part-time service jobs. We are all aware of the kind of exclusion from the workforce, the exclusion from decent paying jobs and the exclusion from justice and fairness in the economy that women experience.

This House has reacted very strongly for the decade that I have been here and in the previous decade to try and get that situation turned around. It is important that a regional development program contemplate very seriously the needs of women. It is not just contemplation in the drafting of the legislation and the policies, but it is also a strong action program associated with it.

The issue that is so important to us is the recent action of the government. I would juxtapose it to the comments on more than one occasion by the Minister for International Trade whose contemptuous remarks toward women in Canada make Canadians wonder if this government really understands what is wrong with his remarks and what is wrong with making the kind of cuts that they did in women's programs.

For the regional development aspect, I would use the example of the Campbell River and District Women's Resource Centre. There was a desperate need in the community for organized assistance for women. One of the major aspects was an opportunity for women to get involved in the workforce. This organization came together and began to provide a service to women by working with other agencies in the community, such as