

Oral Questions

we will be able to discuss that matter fully with hon. members opposite.

Mr. Brisco: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the parliamentary secretary confirm or deny that his minister has accepted the single agency concept put forward by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, and can he confirm or deny that they are planning to enter into an agreement with the FSI to the tune of \$500 million?

Mr. Milne: Mr. Speaker, to the best of the knowledge I have, I would deny that.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**SUGGESTION INCREASED NUMBER OF WOMEN IN WORK FORCE CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT**

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Finance. In view of the fact that today's figures show that unemployment among women has jumped to 10 per cent, the biggest upsurge in some months, the fact that this could very well be a result of the minister's earlier statements about the increased number of women in the work force being a cause of high unemployment, and considering that last night the minister again pursued this tactic by referring to the growing number of women in the labour force as "one of the problems of the past year", I should like to ask the minister when he is going to stop this reprehensible practice of making a correlation between women in the work force and unemployment, a practice which is making it much more difficult for women to find work?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. lady has listened to me—

An hon. Member: Hon. member.

Mr. Chrétien:—yesterday, I said in my speech that I do not quarrel with the fact that women have joined the labour force. What I want to illustrate is that there was an increase of almost 900,000 women in the labour force in the last seven years. That is a fact, and I am not blaming it on the situation. I welcome women participating in the economy, but I want to illustrate the fact that it is one of the new components of the economy of Canada.

We have to cope with this problem, and that is why I have to refer to a fact. I do not know that there is anything wrong when I say there are more women in the labour force. We welcome women in the labour force but, of course, that is extending the difficulty because we have to create sufficient jobs to accommodate everybody.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out to the minister that there are four million women working in this country because of necessity, not because it is a luxury. There are 20,000 more women out of work this month than last

[Mr. Milne.]

month; 430,000 women, in total, are unemployed. Many of these are single, widowed or divorced and have to work.

I should like to ask the minister if he is really sincere in saying that he is no longer going to make women in the work force the scapegoat for unemployment. Will he tell me why he found it necessary last night to refer to the growth of women in the labour force as one of the problems of last year? Why?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to a problem; I referred to a fact. I tried to explain why we have such a growth in the labour force in Canada. I said that society is changing for the good, but there are 800,000, almost 900,000, more women in the labour force now than in past years. I referred later to the problem of young people coming into the labour force. I referred to the fact that in years to come, because there is less enrolment in the schools, the problem will stabilize.

I do not think anyone should be offended just because I refer to the facts of life. I was very cautious in saying in my remarks that I did not blame it on the women. I just said that it is a fact of life that the labour force is increasing because of the young people who have come into the marketplace, and more women than ever; that is all.

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MANPOWER**REQUEST THAT PROGRAMS BE ESTABLISHED TO CREATE JOBS FOR YOUTH**

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the fact that each time we ask questions of this minister, he reiterates the old, tired youth programs which have not done the job of reducing youth unemployment, in view of the fact that last night's budget did not announce any new stimulus or proposals to encourage youth employment, and acknowledging the announcement of Statistics Canada this morning which indicates that youth unemployment is now up to 15.1 per cent—an all-time high—which means that half a million young people are out of work, instead of blaming Canada's young and the so-called baby boom which he could have seen from Statistics Canada figures ten years ago, will the minister tell the House when he is going to start fulfilling his mandate by creating programs and an environment in which young Canadians can find work, and meaningful work?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member is playing with words and twisting them. The fact is, we did try an innovative program, a job experience training program, which was objected to by members of the opposition. It went from 1,000 to 15,000 participants. We tried to bring in work sharing and job creation. Amendments were moved to the act to withdraw those innovative measures, but we stuck to our guns and we have them in place and are making them applicable.