

Supply

There is much we can do. The panel is well on its way to accomplishing its goals. I support their efforts and I think the House supports their efforts. We would like to do more and we hope for some fruitful recommendations.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech the hon. member spoke about the government's commitment to women. He went on at some length, saying how much the government had done, how enthusiastic it had been in its work in supporting women in spite of the manifest cutbacks to which my colleagues who have spoken in this debate have referred.

The view he has taken is that everything is coming up roses in this area, which he started out by saying at the beginning of his speech, and I admit he changed his tune as he came closer to reality a little later on. Does he not agree that perhaps describing things in that way does not help the situation?

What needs to be acknowledged is the fact that despite the efforts the government has made, and it has obviously made some progress in this area and I do not deny it, the cutbacks are seriously undermining that progress. They are damaging the reputation and the progress of the government in dealing with these issues and really he ought to be objecting to the cutbacks that the government has put forward in the budget.

Mr. Thorkelson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has failed to realize that in my speech I dealt with one issue and that was the violence against women. In that area, we have increased resources. We have a \$136 million initiative.

In 1986 the government launched a \$23 million child sexual abuse initiative. In 1988, it followed that with a broader \$40 million family violence initiative and this, in turn, was expanded in February 1991 to a \$136 million initiative on violence against women.

We have taken legislative action in Bill C-36 to extend the amount of time a convicted person must serve, from one-third to one-half of their sentence for those offenders in the violent and dangerous offenders category.

We have embarked on the panel on violence against women. These are concrete initiatives. We fund women's

groups, community groups and many others. We have increased resources on violence against women.

Certainly we can do much more in areas. The recent budget increased the tax deduction for child care and so on. We are well on our way to helping women. I agree that there is much to be done, but in many areas of our society we will never be finished. We must work as hard as we can with what resources we have and add more resources when we can. We will be well on our way to accomplishing some of the goals we have stated.

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, on the matter before us today, equality of women, I would just like to ask the previous speaker if part of the government's equality of women initiatives includes initiatives from the Minister of Labour and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

In Powell River, British Columbia, there are 22 women who have been driven out of their jobs by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. The bank suddenly decided it no longer wanted to negotiate with them to renew the contract and basically said: "We are large enough and wealthy enough that we do not have to listen to you. You can stay out on the street over Christmas and you can stay out for a year or two years. If we choose, we will simply close this branch and set an example for our other small number of unionized branches".

There needs to be some initiatives in terms of the equality of women taken by this government. A good start would be anti-strike-breaking legislation and anti-scab legislation that protects women who are in a tremendous position of inequality when it comes to 22 people going after a chartered bank.

It is also affirmative action on the part of the Minister of Labour when women find themselves in a tremendous situation of inequality, where the office of the minister takes positive affirmative action and attempts to get both parties back to the bargaining table and to reach a settlement. In the search for equality for men and women, in many cases particularly women, the best guarantee for equality is a job and the best guarantee of equality through a job is through a unionized job.

I am asking the hon. member if he believes that the Minister of Labour and the government could be involved with and play a useful role in bringing these people back to the table as well as all women who find