

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member behind me says, Liberals are optimists, not pessimists. That probably describes the difference between Liberal members and Reform members.

We did an assessment last night. One whole section of the red book deals with aboriginal issues. It has been a difficult year, but I can say to the House that on every promise we made in the red book there has been medium to moderate to significant progress made across Canada.

It makes me proud as a member of the Liberal government and the Liberal Party that we have kept our word and done our job in difficult circumstances.

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[Translation]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM**

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

A report from Statistics Canada shows a new decrease in the number of unemployed people covered by unemployment insurance. In 1990, seventy-seven per cent of the unemployed were covered by unemployment insurance, whereas in March of this year the proportion was down to 49.7 per cent. This shows how much the reform introduced by the government in its February 1994 Budget is hitting the unemployed.

Considering that the unemployment insurance plan is helping only half the unemployed, does the Prime Minister not realize that his reform is increasing the poverty problem in Quebec and Canada and that he must rescind the cruel decisions taken in February 1994?

[English]

**Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. It raises the very important issue of unemployment in Canada, which the government takes quite seriously. It is for this reason that through various programs initiated by the government over 460,000 new full time jobs have been created in Canada.

I also bring to the attention of the hon. member that reading the report would make it very clear to her that the reason there are fewer people on unemployment is job creation.

In Quebec over 110,000 full time jobs have been created. Also in the province of Quebec over 86,000 people did not exhaust their UI benefits prior to gaining new employment. That to me is positive change for the people of Canada.

• (1430)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is very hard to swallow since there has not been any net job creation for the last five months, since the new report on social assistance shows that there has been a further increase despite the fact that we are supposed to be in a period of prosperity, since irate unemployed are confronting members everywhere.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Since, to this day, the Unemployment Insurance Fund has a surplus of \$4 billion, due to the cuts and the 15 per cent reduction in the money distributed despite an increase in applications, does the Prime Minister not find it indecent that his Cabinet is studying a plan to cut unemployment insurance by a further \$700 million next year?

[English]

**Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has a very suspicious way of looking at statistics.

The fact is that because of the changes we have made to UI, over 280,000 low income families in this country are benefiting through a differential benefit rate of 60 per cent.

I understand the point made by the members of the opposition, but I think there comes a time in this House when they should be applauding positive measures for people.

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**BOSNIA**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the U.S. and Europe are sending squadrons of F-14 Tomcats, F-18 Hornets, Harrier jump jets, Cobra attack helicopters, an amphibious battle group, and even U.S. nuclear powered, fast attack submarines. Mr. Speaker, does this sound like a humanitarian peacekeeping mandate to you?

Given this rapid escalation, how can the government assure Canadians that our troops will not be inextricably drawn into a war for which they are neither equipped nor mandated?

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we welcome the departure in U.S. foreign policy to perhaps put ground troops into the former Yugoslavia under extreme circumstances to help with the redeployment of UNPROFOR forces. We welcome that possibility. We would like to know how they would be deployed.

With respect to the British and French contingents, the British defence minister has said that those forces will be part of an effort to protect British forces that are in Bosnia, which are