

Oral Questions

this country. That is equally as abhorrent and just as discriminatory.

My supplementary question is for the same minister. In light of the fact that in the next few weeks thousands of fishermen will be out in the Atlantic at perhaps the worst time of the year as the new lobster fishing season opens, without the full protection of the Canadian Coast Guard and fisheries patrol vessels as a direct result of this fully avoidable strike, will the minister finally put his money where his mouth is and give wage parity to these east coast workers now? Or, is he content to wait for tragedy and loss of life before he comes to his senses, does the right thing and conclude a decent agreement with these workers?

Mr. de Cotret: Mr. Speaker, I can only assure my colleagues opposite and all Canadians that we are very conscious of safety and security. We have made all the contingency plans necessary to ensure the safety and security of Canadians during this labour dispute.

Once again, I strongly invite the unions to come back to the table and have meaningful discussions so that this issue can be resolved once and for all.

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RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Canada endorses the United Nations convention on the rights of the child which will be passed today, but we are in breach of this convention at home in Canada. Over 150,000 children each month line up at institutionalized food banks. This is a national disgrace. It is immoral.

What are the Deputy Prime Minister and his government doing to eradicate child hunger in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Clearly, Mr. Speaker, all the members of the House of Commons are quite concerned about the problem of child poverty in Canada. In previous statements, the Minister of National Health and Welfare has described what the Govern-

ment is doing, together with the provinces, to deal with the problem of child poverty in this country. The provinces have implemented programs to feed hungry children. Under the Canada Assistance Plan, we can help them too, but again we are quite concerned with this problem and I am sure that the Minister of National Health and Welfare could give a more complete answer some other time, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, our national government has a responsibility and has signed an agreement at the United Nations to this effect. We are in negligence in this respect. Obviously government measures are not working when hundreds of thousands of hungry kids have to eat from food banks. What we need is more affordable housing, higher minimum wage levels and incomes above the poverty line.

As a senior minister of this government, will the Deputy Prime Minister undertake in the upcoming year to make hungry children a priority? Will he increase the family allowance and the child tax credit, as well as undertake other measures to eradicate child poverty?

We have done it for seniors. We have almost eradicated poverty. Why can we not make children a priority next year?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Since 1984, Mr. Speaker, the government has implemented measures which, although not perfect, have nevertheless been useful. For instance, we have doubled the child tax credit from \$367 to \$565 per child in 1989. The Refundable Sales Tax Credit was adopted in 1986 to help low income families, and 850,000 Canadians were struck from the tax roll through the tax reform. In addition to the day care program which will be further discussed in the House, we have increased the Refundable Child Tax Credit. Of course, I agree that this is not perfect, but in view of the budget cuts we must deal with, our record in this respect is far better than that of the previous government, Mr. Speaker.